# A SPIRITUAL RETREAT

FOR

## One Day in every Month

Written in *French* by a Father of the SOCIETY of JESUS, and Faithfully Tranſlated for the Common good of the *Engliſh*.

Wherein the Author has ſhewn the great Eaſe, Uſefulneſs, Advantage and Method, of Setting a Part and Spending every Month, that ſmall Portion of our time in a *Spiritual Retreat*.

*LONDON.*

Printed by T. F. CIↃ.IↃCC.

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# THE PREFACE.

THE Deſign of Publiſhing this Book, was to ſhew all ſorts of Perſons an eaſie way to make a Spiritual Retreat; thoſe eſpecially who, by reaſon of their Imployments, have not leaſure enuff to Conſecrate to ſuch an Exerciſe of Devotion Eight or Ten Days together in every Year.

And ſince there is reaſon to Hope, that great facility of making theſe Retreats will render the uſage of them common; it was thought fit to have a regard for ſuch Perſons as, having no experience in theſe kind of Practices of Piety, do ſtand in need of a more particular Direction; to which end, in the beginning of this Book, and before the Meditations, ſeveral Chapters are ſet down of the neceſſity of making a Retreat, and of the means of doing it well.

The Meditations, which make the principal Part, or, as one may ſay, the Body of the Work, are all of the great Verities, or

eſſential Points of our Religion. Concerning which, it has been endeavour'd to make a right choice of the ſeveral matters that are treated in them, to place them all in their Natural order, and give to every Subject all the extent, perſpicuity and clearneſs it ought to have, to make the deepeſt Impreſſion theſe great Truths are capable of making on any Man, that conſiders them with care and attention. And because the end every one ſhou'd propoſe in theſe Retreats, is to put himſelf by a real change of Life into a condition of Dying well, it was judg'd neceſſary to annex to the Meditation of Death, which (it's Believ'd) ought to be repeted every Month, a new ſort of Exerciſe, which is a Preparation for Death. This Exerciſe may prove very uſefull if made with the Spirit it ought to be. And, that the Practice of it might be eaſie to all the World, care has been taken to ſet down all things moſt particularly and exactly, even the very Thoughts one muſt endeavour to have, and the Prayers proper to inſpire thoſe Thoughts.

The laſt Part of this Book conſiſts of Chriſtian Reflections on all ſorts of Subjects; which may ſerve for Reading and Entertainment, inſtead of the Conſiderations that are to be met with in other Books of Spiritual Retreat. The multitude and variety of theſe Reflections is ſuch, that all Perſons may find in them ſomething to profit by; every one according to his particular State and Diſpoſition.

THE

THE

# TABLE

OF THE

# MEDITATIONS.


CHAPTER. I.

*OF Spiritual Retreat.* Page, 1.

CHAP. II. *How very important it is, to ſpend one Day every Month in a Retreat.* Page, 8.

CHAP. III. *Of the Diſpoſitions a Man ought to be in, to profit by this Retreat of a Day.* Page, 18.

CHAP. IV. *In what manner this Day of Retreat is to be ſpent.* Page, 24.

*A* MEDITATION, *to diſpoſe ones ſelf to a Retreat.* Page, 32.

I. MEDITATION. *Of the End of Man.* Page, 43. *January and July.*

I. Point. *Man was Created to ſerve God.* Ibid.

II. Point. *Man was Created that by ſerving God he might ſave himſelf.* Page, 50.

# The Contents


II. MEDITATION. *Of the means we have to arrive at our last End.* Page, 57.

I. Point. *Of the means that are common to all Christians.* Ibid.

II. Point. *Of the means that every one has in Particular.* Page, 62.

III. MEDITATION. *Upon the Thoughts which we shall have at the hour of our Death.* P. 67.

I. Point. *Of the thoughts which Loose or Luke-warm Persons will have at the hour of Death.* Page, 69.

II. Point. *Of the thoughts which Persons, who have spent their Life in Fervour and the Practice of Vertue, will have at their last hour.* Pag. 83.

Of Preparation for Death.

Sect. I. *How necessary it is to prepare ones self to Dye.* Page, 93.

Sect. II. *The manner of preparing ones self to Dye well* Page, 101.

Sect. III. *Prayers or short Ejaculations to dispose ones self to Dye well.* Pag. 114.

*February* and *August.* I. MEDITATION. *Of the Importance of our Salvation.* Page, 121.

I. Point. *The affair of our Salvation is the most Important of all affairs.* Ibid.

II. Point. *The affair of our Salvation is our only affair.* Page, 128.

II. MEDITATION. *Of the Motives which Men have continually to labour in the business of their Salvation.* Pag. 135.

I. Point. *Of the motives which are common to all Christians.* Ibid. II. Point.

II. Point. *Of the Motives which every Man has in particular.* Page, 139.
III. MEDITATION. *As* Page, 67.

I. MEDITATION. *Of the Smalneſs of the Number of thoſe that are Sav'd.* Page, 145. *March* and *Septemb.*
I. Point. *That, according as we are taught to Believe, there will be but few Sav'd.* Ibid.
II. Point. *That, according to Reaſon, the Number of thoſe to be Sav'd will be but Small.* Page, 151.
II. MEDITATION. *Of Sins.* Page, 160.
I. Point. *Of Mortal Sins.* Ibid.
II. Point. *Of Venial Sins.* Page, 164.
III. MEDITATION. *As* Page, 67.

I. MEDITATION. *That a Man ought not to delay his Converſion.* P. 172. *April* and *October.*
I. Point. *To put off ones Converſion is to run the danger of not being Converted at all.* Ibid.
II. Point. *For a Man to delay his Converſion, is to put himſelf into a kind of neceſſity never to be Converted.* Page, 178.
II. MEDITATION. *Of the good uſe of our Time.* Page, 185.
I. Point. *Of the preciouſneſs of Time.* Ibid.
II. Point. *The loſs of time is Irreparable.* P. 190.
III. MEDITATION. *As* Page, 67.

I. MEDITATION. *Of the defect of Sincerity in the Will of the greateſt* *May* and *Novemb.*

*eſt part of Chriſtians to work out their Salvation.* Pag. 195.

I. Point. *To be ſincerely willing to labour in the work of Salvation a Man muſt take the means for it.* Ibid.

II. Point. *To be Sav'd it is not enuff to take ſome of the means, all that are neceſſary muſt be taken.* Page, 200.

II. MEDITATION. *Of Luke-warmneſs.* Page, 208.

I. Point. *There is no State more dangerous for Salvation, than that of a Luke-warm Soul.* Ibid.

II. Point. *There is no State from which it is harder to be freed, than that of Luke-warmneſs.* Page, 215.

III. MEDITATION. *As* Page, 67.

*June* and *Decemb.*

I. MEDITATION. *Of Hell.* Page, 219.

I. Point. *The Damn'd ſuffer there all that can be ſuffer'd.* Ibid.

II. Point. *They ſuffer Eternally.* Page, 296.

II. MEDITATION. *Of the Fruits of Repentance.* Page, 234.

I. Point. *Repentance is neceſſary for all ſorts of People.* Ibid.

II. Point. *What ought to be the Fruits of this Repentance.* Page, 239.

III. MEDITATION. *As* Page, 67.

Chriſtian Reflections *Which may ſerve for Subjects of Conſideration for every Day of Retreat.* Page, 245.

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# A SPIRITUAL RETREAT FOR One Day in every Month.

## CHAP. I.

### *Of Spiritual Retreat.*

A Spiritual Retreat is of all the Practices of Piety, one of the moſt proper to Convert a Soul, and perhaps the only one, that is never made uſe of in vain; we may well be but ſlightly touch'd with the moſt terrible Truths of our Religion, when every thing contributes either to Diſtract or to Prevent us. But when a Man is remov'd from the Noiſe and Incumberance of Worldly affairs, he has leiſure to conſider theſe great Truths; which he had never before fully

div'd into nor underſtood, and which then appear to him in a new Light: When he Meditates upon 'em with great Exactneſs and Application, and when all ſerv's to diſcover their true Senſe and Meaning, together with all their Conſequences; 'tis impoſſible they ſhou'd make but an indifferent Impreſſion upon him, eſpecially at a time when Grace do's never more Abound, and the Mind is never better Diſpos'd.

The Experience of ſo many Sinners chang'd, all of a ſudden, by Miraculous Converſions; of ſo many Religious Houſes Eſtabliſh'd or Reform'd; of ſo many lazy, careleſs Chriſtians, drawn out of their Sluggiſhneſs and Inſenſibility, and become in a few Days active and fervent Servants of God; has of a long time been an evident demonſtration, of the advantage that is to be found by conſidering in Solitude and in Order, the great Verities of the Goſpel.

'Tis to theſe Spiritual Exerciſes that Saint *Xavier*, Saint *Charles Boromeus*, Saint *Francis* of *Sales* and almoſt all the Saints of theſe later Ages have acknowledg'd their Converſion and Advancement in Virtue, to be owing; and 'tis after their Example, that all Perſons who are willing to Labor ſeriouſly in the important buſineſs of their Salvation; and all Communities that are never ſo little Regular, do at this Day ſet themſelves an indiſpenſable Law, of Conſecrating Ten, or Eight Days at leaſt in every Year, to this Holy kind of Exerciſe.

It is

It is to no purpoſe for a Man to Flatter himſelf with ſaying, 'tis very difficult to defend on's ſelf from bad deſires, while ingag'd in the World, where every thing conſpires to beget them; and that 'tis very hard to Live long in ſo Corrupt an Age, without Participating of the Contagion: The warmeſt Zeal grows cool with time, and the moſt confirm'd in Vertue, have often need to renew their Strength and Reſolutions: Whoever therefore deſires to breath a pure Air, muſt of neceſſity retire from the Croud, and now and then at leaſt ſteal into a Solitude.

As 'tis by too looſe and heedleſs a Converſation, that our Fervor do's abate and our Vertue become weak; ſo it can never be retriv'd or re-eſtabliſh'd, but by a timely Retreat, and an inward Recollection. The Holy Ghoſt did not viſibly Deſcend, till the Apoſtles ſeparated themſelves from the Multitude, and went into the Deſart: And Saint *Bernard* own's, †*That he cou'd never hearken to the Voice of God whilſt he was in Company, and taken up with outward things;* but he add's, *That being come to himſelf, he quitted all things and retir'd into a Solitude; that he might with freedom and leiſure Converſe with the Almighty, and be able to ſay to him with confidence; ſpeak my God, for thy Servant heareth; ſpeak for I am ready to Obey you.*

† Quam diu in exterioribus occupatus fui, Vocem tuam audire non potui, nunc autem reverſus ad me, ingreſſus ſum ad te, ut poſſim te audire audit ſervus tuus: Loquere ergo miſericordiſſime, quia tibi loqui: Loquere quia paratus ſum audire. *Sanct. Bern. de inter. Dom. cap. 66.*

Can Men reaſonably refuſe to make uſe of ſo advantagious a means, when the need of them is ſo great? They are, 'tis true, ſufficiently perſwaded of the neceſſity of making a Retreat; but all the difficulty is, how to find a time for it. This is the common excuſe of the greateſt part of thoſe that do it not. But my God! Will this excuſe avail or be accepted? Our affairs take up all our time; is not our Salvation then an affair? Or can we have any of a nearer concern or greater conſequence? Alas! to ſpeak properly we have no other affair but this alone; our whole Life is given us for no other End but to Labor in it; God has judg'd that it cannot be compaſs'd in leſs time; and becauſe that Eight or Ten Days are wholly to be ſet aſide, and imploy'd in this ſingle affair, can it be therefore ſayd that one has no time for't?

If we were Sick, the care of our Health wou'd make us quit all thoughts of any thing elſe; if a Man be in danger of loſing a Law Suit, a Piece of Land, or any unlucky accident happen, that may prove of ill conſequence to a Friend or Relation; all other affairs are preſently layd aſide for whole Months together, nothing but this alone is thought of, and then it will be ſayd, there is a neceſſity for it: But allowing that this is neceſſary; is it not alſo full as neceſſary to quit the State of Sin, as to be cur'd of a fit of Sickneſs? As neceſſary not to loſe Heaven, as to preſerve a Piece of Land? And can there poſſibly be a greater misfortune than

to

to be in a manifeſt danger of being Damn'd?

We hope to imploy in the buſineſs of our Salvation, the firſt ſpare time our affairs will allow us: Alas! If we our ſelves find not time, our affairs will never allow us any. Let not our Salvation be ſo indifferent a thing to us: Let us but eſteem it an affair, and then we ſhall eaſily find Eight or Ten Days to be ſet aſide wholly for this great, this weighty affair of Eternity.

It is very ſurpriſing to find, that the moſt Innocent Perſons, and thoſe who have leaſt need of a Retreat, ſhou'd believe they cannot be ſecure without one; that Apoſtolic Men who go into the World for no other end, but to make it better, ſhou'd be affraid to be Perverted by it; that thoſe Pure Souls, who never loſe the ſight of God, ſhou'd notwithſtanding acknowledge that they are ſometimes Diſtracted in the holieſt Exerciſes of their Zeal; that theſe Chriſtian Hero's ſhou'd interrupt or break off their Labors, to Recollect themſelves from time to time in Retirement and Solitude, and not think it poſſible to defend themſelves from the ill infectious Air of the World, without taking Preſervatives, and receiving more Strength in a Retreat; that Religious Perſons even the moſt Regular; whoſe whole Life is but one continual Retreat, ſhou'd not however look upon themſelves as ſufficiently retir'd: And yet, on the other hand, that Perſons (who have not near ſo great a Fund of Vertue, Perſons every moment expos'd to the greateſt dangers, that live in a con-

tinual Diſtraction of Spirit, in the midſt of a Corrupt World, and who confeſs how hard it is to eſcape being Damn'd in it) ſhou'd notwithſtanding believe, that they have no need of an Eight Days Retreat, and that ſuch a thing is not neceſſary or convenient for them; and 'tis for the moſt part, under this falſe pretext, that they have no time nor leiſure for it. Alas, alas! That People who are at a loſs how to ſpend their time, tir'd with idleneſs, and weary of doing nothing, trifling away the greateſt part of their Life in vain and empty amuſements, ſhou'd pretend they have not time! For ſhame, let us be Sincere and acknowledge the Truth, that we only want Will, and not Time.

The high-way where the Myſterious Seed of the Word of God is trodden under-foot, and carried away by the Birds of the Air, is a lively repreſentation of a Man engag'd in the troubleſome entanglements of Worldly affairs; and ſince we cannot be ſav'd without making a right uſe of Grace, and that Heavenly Seed cannot grow up, or even begin to Sprout in a Heart expos'd to noiſe, and taken up and pleas'd with the croud; 'tis plain we are under a kind of neceſſity to ſteal away, and enter into a Retreat from time to time, unleſs we reſolve abſolutely to renounce our Salvation, and for ever bid adieu to all thoughts of Heaven.

But what will the World ſay of me, if it ſhou'd be perceiv'd that I have for ſome Days withdrawn my ſelf into a Solitude, with

with design to think of nothing but the busineſs of my Salvation? To what a number of ſharp and biting Jeſts and Railleries ſhall I be expos'd? Oh my God! How long ſhall ſo vain, ſo unſeaſonable a fear make the beſt Thoughts and greateſt Graces uſeleſs and ineffectual? How long ſhall it be able to Break and Shipwrack the moſt excellent Reſolutions? What will Men ſay? Why, they will ſay, that we are really minded to ſave our Souls, and that we take the moſt efficacious means to do it. The Wiſe will be pleas'd and commend us for it; many will follow our Example; and if there ſhall be any found to blame or object againſt ſo Chriſtian a Conduct, they will be but ſome few profligat looſe Libertins, of ſo little importance, that their good Word wou'd be a real Reproach, and their ſharpeſt Railleries the beſt and trueſt Commendations: But is it poſſible that any one can be in good earneſt concern'd, for what ſuch kind of People may think?

We are not aſham'd to throw away whole Days at Play, in vain amuſements and idle divertiſements; of which if we do not already, we ſhall certainly one Day come to Repent; and yet we have not the courage to conſecrate Eight or Ten Days in a Year to the affair of Eternity, the great affair of our Salvation.

## CHAP. II.

### *How very important it is, to spend one Day every Month in a Retreat.*

ALL Men will easily agree that a Spiritual Retreat is one of the most proper means to lead a Regular Life, and work their Salvation; but 'tis not so easie to perswade all the world that they may, if they will, find leisure for it. Eight Days seem too long to abundance of People, and in truth the affairs of many Persons, will not allow them to spend so much time in it.

But granting that the Incumbrance of affairs, the care of a Family, the want of Health, the Imployment and State of Life one is in, may serve some for Reasons or Pretences, to excuse themselves from a Retreat of Eight Days: Yet who can with any colour of Reason dispence with himself from making a Retreat of one Day at least in every Month, whilst he is at liberty to choose what Day he will? Is there any thing more Reasonable? Or can there be found a more useful, or more easie Practice of Devotion?

There is but one Day in a Month desir'd to be imploy'd in the most important of all the

the affairs of our Life; and in which (preferably to all others) we ought to Labour all our Life long; and upon the ſucceſs of which depends an Eternal Happineſs. A Retreat of one Day in a Month is deſir'd; that is to ſay, that having imploy'd all the reſt of the Month in the affairs of another, we ſhou'd take out of it one ſingle Day, and ſpend it wholly in our own only great affair; or that having Daily Labor'd for that Moment of Time we are to live upon Earth; we ſhou'd beſtow one Day at leaſt in Laboring for an Eternity.

There is no body that wou'd not Dedicate to the Service of his Friend, more than one Day in a Month; alas! Men throw away as much upon vain Pleaſures, play and Trifles: there is but one thing deſir'd, to be wholly and ſeriouſly imploy'd about our Salvation, and can it be refus'd, without ſhewing an extream indifference what becomes of our Soul, and the ſmall deſire we have to be Sav'd? Eſpecially if Men will but take the pains to Read in the following Chapters, the manner of making this Retreat of a Day, it ſeems not poſſible, that any one can, with the leaſt colour of Reaſon, refuſe to undertake it.

What pains do Merchants take to Enrich themſelves and make their Fortune? They are always upon the Watch, and never let any Opportunity ſlip. How exact are they in examining from time to time the State of their affairs, their Loſs and their Gain? Let us like them take one Day at leaſt carefully to Examin the State of our Conſcience, and

what progreſs we have made in the way of Vertue.

'Tis not hard to conceive how uſeful ſuch a Chriſtian Practice wou'd be to all ſorts of Perſons, and how effectual it wou'd prove, either for bringing back Sinners from their wanderings, and drawing 'em to God; or for confirming the Juſt, and raiſing 'em to a higher Degree of Chriſtian Perfection.

Beſides, ſince that all the Meditations are upon the moſt important Truths of Religion, it is very hard, that a Perſon who every Month interrupts the courſe of his moſt ſerious Occupations; who withdraws himſelf for one Day from the Commerce of Men, that he may wholly imploy himſelf in the buſineſs of his Salvation; 'tis very hard I ſay, that he ſhou'd not ſucceed in it. And ſhall God who has been ſo long calling and ſearching after thoſe who eſtrange themſelves from him; who leaves not off ſpeaking to thoſe whom the noiſe of Worldly affairs has made Deaf to his Voice, eſtrange himſelf from thoſe who ſo often come to ſeek him in Solitude and Retirement, and ſuffer himſelf to be heard and heeded but indifferently by ſuch as lay aſide and abandon all things to hearken to his Word?

It is not any particular Duty of our State and Condition that obliges us to this Retreat, nor is it Cuſtom that engages us in it, nor is it the Fame and Reputation, that is inſeparable from other Exerciſes of Piety, which draws us to it; 'tis nothing but a ſincere deſire of Laboring ſeriouſly in the work

of

of our Salvation, that carries us to it; and can ſo ſincere a deſire not be effectual, or be but indifferently advantagious? It ſeems to me impoſſible, that any Man can live Looſely, that every Month takes care to ſpend one Day in the Regulation of his Life; or that any one can be in danger to be ſurpriz'd by Death, when he prepares himſelf ſo conſtantly for it.

But that which makes us ſee in a more ſenſible manner, the importance of this Retreat, is the neceſſity all of us are under; of often making ſerious Reflexions upon the great Verities of our Faith. The reaſon why there are ſo few People ſolidly Vertuous, altho' the Religion we Profeſs obliges us to the ſublimeſt of Vertues, is our ſo little reflecting on the great Truths of this Chriſtian Religion. Men content themſelves with ſubmitting the Light of Reaſon to the Articles of Faith, and are ſatisfied with barely Believing, for 'tis rare to find many Infidels within the Pale of the Church; but I know not whether it be not leſs rare to find many Chriſtians that make ſerious Reflexions on what they Believe. Hence it comes to paſs, that what we Believe of the laſt End of Man, of the ſmall number of the Elect, of the pains of Hell, and the torments of an unhappy Eternity, makes but a very ſlight impreſſion on our Minds: And it may be truly ſayd that the want of Reflexion, is at this Day, as it always was, the moſt ordinary cauſe of our Sins, of our Relapſes, of our ſmall progreſs in the way of Vertue.

'Tis moſt certain that as we become not Learn'd but by Reflecting much on what we Read, ſo alſo we become not Vertuous but by often reflecting on what we Believe: great Converſions are commonly the Fruit of ſome ſerious Reflexion; and without that, the moſt dreadful Truths of our Religion, the accidents that touch us neareſt, and even the moſt ſenſible Graces are of no effect.

Let a Man but attentively conſider, the Vanity of what is moſt Charming in the World, and calmly Reflect on what he believes concerning Hell, Judgment and Eternity; let him but enter into the conſideration of all it's Rigors, and let him but fore-ſee all their Conſequences, and it will be hardly poſſible, for him not to yield to Grace, which always takes the advantage of ſuch happy Moments. They were theſe kind of Reflexions, if I may ſo ſpeak, that peopl'd the Deſarts, and which ſtill Daily fill Religious Houſes; they are theſe which make Sinners return from their wanderings and the errors of their Ways. Let the Art of making ſerious Reflexions be but found, and in it will be found an Art of Reforming the Conduct of Men; of entertaining and keeping up Zeal and Fervor in Religious Communities; of hindering the greateſt Diſorders; and in a word there will be in it found the Art of making Saints.

And this is exactly what's propos'd to be attain'd by this Retreat of a Day, that is to ſay, the inabling Men to make ſerious Reflexions upon the moſt important Truths of

of our Faith, in which this whole Day is to be pass'd over, in Reflecting seriously upon our Conduct and our Belief, and herefore is properly a Day of Reflexion; whence it may be easily judg'd how useful to Christian and so necessary a Practice may prove, and how important 'tis for a Man to acquit himself perfectly of it.

It is true that the Retreat of Eight Days is intended for the same End, but besides that the length of time serves many for a false pretext to run over slightly the Truths of most concern, these Reflexions are made but once a Year; but in the Retreat now propos'd they are to be oftener made, to wit, upon one Day in every Month.

This Christian Method is not a new or Modern Practice, it was customary and familiar to the greatest Saints of former Ages; it was to this Divine Art that Saint *Ignatius* Founder of the SOCIETY of JESUS, acknowledg'd he ow'd his advancement in Vertue; and this is that Exercise of Piety which he took so much care to inspire into his Children. It was by these kind of Retreats that the Blessed *Stanislaus* Novice of this very SOCIETY, preserv'd that great Innocence, and acquir'd that tender Devotion and that perfect Vertue to which he soon arriv'd in the ordinary way of Life: It was also by the same Art that Holy *Lewis Gonzaga* (much more illustrious by the greatness of his Vertue, than his Birth) rais'd himself to that height of Perfection which we all admire: And without doubt 'tis by their Example and

Practice

Practice that this Devotion is become now a days ſo familiar, and ſo much in uſe among the moſt ſolidly Vertuous Perſons, and ſuch as are deſirous to advance themſelves in the ways of Vertue.

And in truth it may be properly ſayd, that it was JESUS CHRIST himſelf, that firſt gave us the Example of theſe ſhort and frequent Retreats, by withdrawing himſelf ſo often from the Croud, and even from his own Diſciples, to retire alone to a Mountain or a Deſart: And the Fruit reap'd by this Exerciſe of Piety, ſufficiently ſhew's how very agreeable 'tis to him.

'Tis not neceſſary to ſeek a place of Solitude out of a Mans own Houſe, and beſides, this Retreat may be made without any interruption to Buſineſs, and without omitting any the ſmalleſt Duties of his Eſtate or Condition. Is there not a Holy-day in a Month? At leaſt are there not four Sundays in every one? Let but that Day in every Month be pitch'd upon wherein a Man is leaſt buſied. All inſiſted on, is but to withdraw on's ſelf for one Day only, from ſome part of his Diverſions. Some unneceſſary Viſits, and ſome ſuch like ſlight Occupations, to be at leiſure by deep and ſerious Reflexions to mind nothing but the important affair of our Salvation; and who wou'd be ſo great an Enemy to himſelf, as to refuſe ſpending one Day in a Month, in this buſineſs of the greateſt Conſequence?

There is but one Day demanded, and Salvation is worth but little, if it deſerves

not

not at leaſt the experiment of a means ſo cheap and ſo efficacious: And ſurely tho' it were to coſt us much more, cou'd a Man pay too dear for this Teſtimony of a good Conſcience, this inward Peace which exceeds all imagination, in a word this ſweet Truſt and Confidence in the Mercy of our Lord, and a hundred other advantages, which are the ordinary Fruits of a Mans care of his Salvation, by Conſecrating one whole Day in every Month to an affair of this Conſequence? Can there be leſs than this exacted for it? But that which is very ſurpriſing, is, that 'tis neceſſary to find out ſo many reaſons to induce and perſwade us to ſet a part and beſtow one whole Day upon the thoughts only of our Salvation.

We muſt expect that the Devil, the profeſs'd Enemy of Mans Salvation, who well knows the advantage of this Retreat, will forget no Arguments to diſſwade us from it. He will be continually raiſing new obſtacles and a hundred little difficulties, which many cowardly lazy Souls will not have the Courage to reſiſt and overcome. One while a Man will fancy himſelf Sick and out of Order, another while he will be out of Humor; a hundred falſe Reaſons will preſent themſelves to make Men put off this Retreat to another Day, and to put them under a kind of neceſſity not to do it at all; a hundred little buſineſſes will happen, which they will imagine ought not to be deferr'd: but a little Generoſity, a little Reſolution, and a hearty good Will to work out our Salvation,

will

will be sufficient to make all these vain pretexts and pretended difficulties Vanish.

This useful and necessary Exercise of Piety will be very easie and convenient enuff for all sorts of Estates and Conditions, all kinds of Occupations and Imployments. It is equally proper for all Persons whether Secular or Religious; for those who are arriv'd at a sublime Perfection, as well as those who begin, or have need to be Converted: But more especially for all such Persons as Live in a State of Luke-warmness and Indifferency; these can scarcely meet with a more efficacious Remedy than this Exercise, to draw them out of the unhappy Condition they are in; and if this Remedy proves unuseful to them, their Evil is in some manner Incurable.

As Ecclesiastic or Religious Persons, are oblig'd by their calling to be more Perfect than other Christians, so is it very visible that this Retreat of a Day, must be a great help to inable them to arrive at the Perfection necessary for the State of Life they are ingag'd in; nor can any other sort of People in my opinion more easily than these, find one Day in every Month for this Retreat.

But yet in case there shou'd be any among those Consecrated to God, who under pretence of over much business, shou'd refuse to undertake this Exercise, there is no more to be done, but to put them in mind of what Saint *Austin* answer'd to *Valerius* his Bishop, upon a Subject almost like this: † *What cou'd Justifie me before God*, sayd this great Saint,

† Quid enim respondurus eram Do-

Saint, *if I ſhou'd dare to tell him that the Multitude of Church affairs had hinder'd me, from retiring to think how I might Perfect my ſelf? But if he ſhou'd ſay to me; Wicked Servant you wou'd have found means to abſent your ſelf for a long time, if neceſſary to plead or maintain a ſuit againſt an unjuſt Intruder, and to conſerve to your Church a piece of Ground, deſtin'd for the relief of the Corporal Neceſſities of the Poor; and yet you cou'd not find time to make a ſhort Retreat, in order to your own Sanctification; you, who knew how neceſſary Health was not only for Comforting and Aſſiſting the Poor in their Corporal Neceſſities, but alſo for Laboring efficaciouſly in the Work of Salvation of all ſorts of People. What Anſwer ſhou'd I make to this?* Continu'd this great Saint? But what ſhou'd we our ſelves Anſwer to the Reproach that will be one Day made us, if we be now ſo indifferent about our Salvation, as not to be willing to imploy Eight or Ten Days in a Retreat? But my God! What cou'd a Man have then to Anſwer, if he ſhou'd be found unwilling to make a Retreat even of one Day? There is no room left to excuſe our ſelves upon pretence that the execution of ſome of the particular affairs we are ingag'd in, is ty'd to ſome certain Days, ſince we are at Liberty to chooſe what Day we will for our Retreat; and if your affairs do ſo increaſe and preſs upon you, as to purſue you even to the Day you had pitch'd upon; let us follow Saint *Eucherius's* Counſel to *Valerian*: * *Break this endleſs*

nino judicij? non poteram cum Eccleſiaſticis negotijs impedirer: ſi ergo mihi dicat: ſerve nequam, ſi villa Eccleſia cura dicendam agriculturam meam vacationem emporis. ibi defuiſſe Cauſaris? &c. Quid reſpondeam rogo te. *Auguſt. epiſt. 148. ad Valerium.*

* Abrumpatur illa

*endleſs Chain of Secular affairs: That our Salvation which is our firſt and chief buſineſs may for the future have our firſt and greateſt thought and care; let us make it our only and principal affair, to which is owing our whole Application.*

interminabilis ſeculariumnegotiorum catena, primas apud nos curas, quæ prima habentur obtineant, ſummaſque ſibi ſollicitudinis partes, ſalus quæ ſumma eſt, vendicet; hæc nos jam occupet non prima, ſed ſola. *S. Euch. Epiſc. Lugd. in epiſt ad Valerian.*

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## CHAP. III.

### *Of the Diſpoſitions a Man ought to be in to profit by this Retreat of a Day.*

THE Fruit to be expected from theſe Exerciſes of Piety do depend very much on the Motives we have to them, the diſpoſitions we are in, and the means we take for the performing 'em. As to the Motives one cannot in my opinion have any for ſo Holy a Practice, but very good and Perfect on's. Nothing but a ſincere deſire to reform our Manners, to regulate our Conduct, and to increaſe in Vertue is able to induce us to make this Retreat; ſince it is done without Noiſe and Oſtentation, and that Pride and Self-love cannot find their account

account in it; it ſeem's hard to think that Men ſhou'd ever have any other Motives to it than thoſe I have juſt now mention'd. It remains then to ſhew firſt what Diſpoſitions a Man ought to be in, and afterwards what means he muſt take to reap an advantage by it. One great Diſpoſition to profit by this Retreat, is to enter into it with an Opinion that we have great need on't, and that this Practice of Piety will be a mighty help to us.

The other Diſpoſitions, which of neceſſity one muſt bring to this Retreat to Benefit by it, are almoſt the ſame with thoſe, which, the Author of the Retreat according to the Spirit and Method of Saint *Ignatius*, has mention'd in his Preface, and which may be reduc'd to theſe five. The firſt is, a ſincere deſire to think ſeriouſly of our Salvation, and to Examin truly and thoroly without flattering our ſelves or diſguiſing any thing, what Progreſs we make in the way of Perfection, what Fruit we receive by the uſe of the Sacraments, what Victories we have got over our ſelves, what Conqueſts of our Paſſions, whether we are now in a Condition to appear before God and give an account of our whole Life, and laſtly, whether we are now ſuch as we wou'd deſire to be at the Hour of our Death.

But all theſe Examins, Actions and Reflexions will be very uſeleſs and inſignificant, if the deſire of knowing what is moſt reprehenſible in our Conduct, be not accompanied with a full Reſolution to Reform and Amend

Amend it. This is not one of thoſe unfruitful Practices of Devotion, which for the moſt part only ſerve to entertain and amuſe Imperfect Chriſtians in their Failings and Tranſgreſſions. Thoſe who have not an unfeign'd Intention and a true Deſire to go heartily to God, and who content themſelves with a Luke-warm Life, will not find this Practice very agreeable, but on the contrary will ſoon grow Weary and be Diſguſted at it.

The Second diſpoſition, is an Humble Diſtruſt of on's ſelf, ſupported by a firm Confidence in God, with a full Perſwaſion that our Salvation is chiefly his Work, and that Man without his Aſſiſtance can do nothing in it; but that he having inſpir'd us with a deſire to make this Retreat, Will not refuſe us thoſe Graces which are neceſſary for getting an advantage by it: This deſire alone wherewith God has inſpir'd us, to Benefit by a means ſo proper for our Converſion, cannot but be a ſenſible proof that 'tis the ſincere Will of God, that we ſhou'd return and be Converted; and 'tis alſo very remarkable that thoſe who have made a looſe ill End, did not make much uſe of theſe ſort of means.

The third diſpoſition is a liberal Heart towards God, ready to give him all things without reſerve; and telling him with the Reſignation of Saint *Paul*, O my God what wou'd thou have me do; or with that of *David*, my Heart is ready Lord, my Heart is ready to do whatſoever thou ſhall Command,

mand. The want of this Diſpoſition makes the holieſt Exerciſes of Piety Fruitleſs and Ineffectual.

From the moment that a Man begins to think of being Perfectly Converted, he is at a loſs within himſelf, he wou'd and he wou'd not, and really do's not know what he wou'd be at; becauſe that oftentimes he wou'd not in reality have that which he pretends moſt to deſire; he is continually playing tricks and managing things with God Almighty, always keeping back ſomething, of what he promis'd to give him; deliberating upon every thing he demands, and diſputing with him, as I may ſay, inch by inch. Oh Lord! What are Men affraid of? They are affraid of giving themſelves up intirely to God; not that we are not perſwaded but that this Reſignation wou'd be very uſeful to us; but we cannot make this ſtep without pain; becauſe we eaſily foreſee that if we wou'd once abandon our ſelves wholly to God, God wou'd not fail to Communicate himſelf to our Souls in a more ſenſible manner; and this Grace wou'd preſently and infallibly give us a diſguſt, and put us quite out of conceit with all Created things; and this is what we wou'd not be, and what in truth we are affraid of.

The Fourth Diſpoſition, is a great exactneſs in obſerving the Order and Method a Man ſets himſelf for this Retreat, and in acquitting himſelf perfectly of all the Exerciſes of that Day, neglecting nothing that may inable him to do them well, eſteeming nothing

thing little, that has any relation to ſo important an End as that of Salvation; and perſwading himſelf, what is very true, that the principal Fruit of this Practice of Devotion, depends upon this extream exactneſs in ſmall things; whether it be that this Punctuality is a viſible proof of the ſincere deſire a Man has, to profit by a means ſo efficacious, or that it ingages God, as I may ſay, not to deny any thing to a Soul, which neglects nothing that may pleaſe him.

The Fifth Diſpoſition is a Perfect Solitude, as well Interior as Exterior, keeping himſelf in a continued great Recollection, which is the Soul as it were of all Spiritual Retreats; to which End a profound Silence is extreamly uſeful, avoiding as much as poſſible all that can Diſtract us.

'Tis moſt certain that in a Retreat of Eight or Ten Days the Devil will find ſome occaſion to make a cowardly imperfect Soul, which will think that a long time to Converſe with none but God, grow weary and be diſguſted at ſo Holy an Exerciſe; ſuch a Soul has hardly begun when 'tis tir'd. One that has ſmall inward Conſolation in Prayer, and is almoſt always Diſtracted in it, and has but half a mind to be Converted, and is cold in his Devotion; the Holieſt Practices and moſt Spiritual Exerciſe become Nauſeous and Diſtaſtful, and Eight Days Retreat appears to be an Age; he counts agen and agen the Days, and earneſtly wiſhes to ſee an end of 'em: But here is no ſuch danger, here is but one Day Propos'd,

a Day

a Day of Recollection, which may do as much Service and perhaps more, than a longer Retreat; why therefore ought Men to forget any thing, that may inable them to ſpend ſo Precious a time well?

One Day in a Month is indeed but a very ſmall matter; let us at leaſt give this little with a good Heart and a good Grace; let us endeavour to acquit our ſelves ſo perfectly well in all the Spiritual Exerciſes of this Day, as that we may have nothing to reproach our ſelves with on that account; one Day is quickly paſt over, let us at leaſt have the Conſolation not to have omitted or forgot any thing that might have contributed to our ſpending that Day well.

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CHAP.

## CHAP. IV.

### *In what manner this Day of Retreat is to be ſpent.*

SINCE the Day for this Retreat is left undetermin'd, every one ought to chooſe in every Month, that wherein he foreſees he ſhall have leaſt buſineſs, which ſeems moſt convenient for him, and freeſt from diſtractions. One ſhou'd if he can poſſibly Communicate on the Day of his Retreat; thoſe whoſe Buſineſs or Imployments takes up their time on working-days, ſhou'd make choice of a Sunday or a Holy-day; and Religious Perſons chooſe that, wherein they may have moſt leiſure for this exerciſe of Piety.

It were fit on the Eve of this Day to make a Meditation of half an Hour, to diſpoſe on's ſelf for this Retreat; one ought at leaſt to Read with attention that which is propos'd for this End, and thoſe who have the convenience of Viſiting JESUS CHRIST in the Holy Sacrament, ſhou'd do it the Evening before with that Intention.

The Retreat Day ſhou'd be paſs'd over in a profound Silence, a great inward Recollection,

collection, and in as perfect a Solitude as the Persons Condition and State of Life will permit, but yet without being hereby oblig'd in Religious Communities to quit their ordinary Recreation, and much less the other Duties of their Station.

On this Day ought to be made the three Meditations design'd for every Month; one whole hour also ought to be spent in the Consideration of such Truths as are altogether Practical; one may likewise make a larger Confession than ordinary; wherein the Faults of particular Confessions shou'd be endeavor'd to be repair'd, exciting on's self above all things to a true Contrition, in which all kind of People, and principally the most Regular Persons are often wanting.

One ought to hear Mass and Communicate that Day, with as much Devotion, if possible, as if it were to be the last time one was to Communicate; and with this very Thought, all the other Exercises of Piety ought to be perform'd. The Priests most especially ought to consider, whether their Life be answerable to the Sublime Holiness of their Character; and whether they say Mass like Men truly touch'd with the sense of what they make Profession to Believe. They ought on that Day to Offer up the Adorable Sacrifice with as much Devotion, as if that Mass were to be, if we may say so, a Reparation of the Faults they Committed in all the former, and as a Model of all they shall hereafter say; not forgetting any thing that may inable them to be-

nefit more by it, than they had done by all the former.

One muſt be very careful to keep himſelf extreamly Retir'd, and to avoid, as much as poſſible, every thing that may occaſion any Diſtraction, there is no danger of being weary'd; a Day ſo taken up as this is, paſſes away faſt enuff: It is but a Retreat of one Day, wherein nothing ſhou'd be forgot to make this whole Day at leaſt, be truly a Day of Retreat; and therefore one ought to endevour to ſhut himſelf up in his Chamber or Cloſet all the time he ſpends not in the Church, and indeed that place wou'd be moſt proper for the greateſt part of theſe Spiritual Exerciſes; not but that a Perſon may be as much retir'd before the Bleſſed Sacrament, as he can be in his Cloſet.

Since the Practice of this Exerciſe of Piety is extraordinary uſeful for all ſorts of People, and that beſides the number of thoſe who know not how to Meditate, do's far ſurpaſs the Number of thoſe that do; it was reaſonable that in the Meditations propounded, there ſhou'd be a greater regard had for the greater Number; the Meditations therefore were made very Long, to the end they might find themſelves an hours uſeful Imployment, and might truly Meditate and Reap all the Fruit of a Meditation, by only Reading it with Attention.

Thoſe, to whom the uſe of Meditation is become familiar, ſhou'd only make uſe of ſuch of theſe as they ſhall judge neceſſary: But both the one and the other ſhou'd be very

very careful not to fall into the ordinary Fault of moſt of them, that Meditate upon the great Truths of Religion; who being preſently perſwaded of their Truth, think they have no more to do, when once they are convinc'd of 'em in their Heart; but 'tis not enuff to believe theſe great Verities; the Devils alſo Believe them better than we do, and Tremble at them: We muſt paſs from Speculation to Practice, and our Meditations muſt always have for their End, the Reformation of our Manners: So that we ought not to content our ſelves with Reading and with being perſwaded that what we have Read is True: We muſt further conſider ſeriouſly and in Cold Blood, what we have been Meditating upon, apply it to our ſelves, draw from it all the conſequences, and then make all the Reflections which every Man of good Senſe is capable of making, and which we our ſelves ſhall not fail to make at the hour of our Death, that is to ſay, when we ſhall hardly be in a condition to reap any advantage by them.

The Meditations are to be made in this following manner; you Read them with attention, ſtop and pauſe longeſt at what touches you moſt; ask your ſelf, as one may ſay, if what you Read, what you Meditate upon be true, if to this preſent moment you have liv'd Conformable to what you have Read; what ſhall be the Fruit which you intend for the time to come to gather from this double Knowledge; and what ought you to expect if this Meditation prove but like

the reſt, from which you have drawn no Advantage.

Trouble not your ſelf to Read all: Tho' one ſingle Reflexion ſhou'd have taken up the whole hour, provided it be with profit, you have ſpent the time of your Meditation well: In ſuch a caſe the remainder of the Meditation will ſerve as a Spiritual Lecture, and may be Read with attention any other hour of the Day.

The conſideration is of importance; and therefore ought to be done with care. It conſiſts in Reading attentively, the Reflections which are at the end of this Book; but yet with this precaution, that one ought to ſtop and dwell longer on thoſe which concern us moſt, paſſing over more lightly ſuch as are leaſt proper for us.

Beſides this hour of Conſideration which ordinarily is taken in the Afternoon, one ought, if it be poſſible, to make one of half an hour in the Morning: Religious Perſons upon the Obſervation of their Rules; others upon the Particular Duties of their State or Calling: every one obſerving carefully what he has fail'd in, and taking from that Moment the moſt effectual means for his Amendment: If this half hour cannot be conveniently found, the hour for Conſideration is to be divided, one part to be imploy'd in thoſe general Reflections, the other in the Conſideration of our Particular Rules, and the Duties of our Station.

One thing nevertheleſs is to be remark'd as a moſt important Point; that one ought not

not in theſe Spiritual Exerciſes, to content himſelf with making fine Projects, and ſtrong Reſolutions to Reform his Life; theſe Reſolutions how ſincere ſoever they ſeem, will for certain prove uſeleſs, if from that Minute he takes not ſure and efficacious means to practiſe what he has reſolv'd.

'Tis not fit to tire on's ſelf with over much reading; 'tis better to read a little with profit, than a great deal without any. Every Man ought to chooſe things which are moſt proper for him; one ſhou'd not content himſelf to Read, only that he may be able to ſay he has done his Spiritual Lecture; on the contrary he ought to perform his Spiritual Lecture, with a deſign to Benefit by what he Reads.

It has been already ſayd, that Religious Perſons ought not to omit the Exerciſes of their Community, nor even their ordinary Recreations: But as they may have already remark'd by their Reflections, the Faults they us'd to Commit in them, ſo they ought to be very glad to perceive that very Day the effect of their Retreat; by beginning then to mend, what they ſhall have obſerv'd to have been before amiſs in their Conduct, behaving themſelves on all occaſions like Men already Converted or Reform'd: One ought to take great care at that time more than any other, to lift up frequently his Heart to God, to avoid the Diſtraction of Mind, which is commonly the conſequence of Converſation.

This Spiritual Retreat, being properly ſpeaking, a preparation for Death, 'tis fit to make the third Meditation in every Retreat, upon the Thoughts we ſhall have at that laſt hour: This Subject appears ſo proper for the End it was Intended for, that it was believ'd that this ſingle Meditation wou'd alone be ſufficient for all the Months.

Now as the principal Fruit a Man is to gather from this Exerciſe of Piety, ought to be the Reformation, of all he has obſerv'd faulty in his Conduct ſince his laſt Retreat: So a greater deſire of Perfection, the Conqueſt of his predominant Paſſions, a more Ardent Affection for JESUS CHRIST in the Holy Sacrament, and a greater exactneſs in performing his Duty, is what he ought to take care to propound to himſelf at the beginning of this Retreat, as the Benefit he do's expect to Reap by it. And ſince 'tis properly a preparation for Death, one ſhou'd always go out of it in the State he wou'd gladly be found in at the laſt hour, not forgeting afterwards any thing that may help to preſerve him in that Condition.

Looſe, wandering, and general Reſolutions are commonly of no advantage; and therefore it is an excellent Practice in every Retreat, to pitch upon ſome one kind of Fault; which a Man deſires to Correct himſelf in, and which may ſerve as a ſubject for particular Examination, till the Retreat of the following Month.

That a Man may conſerve the Fruits of this Days Retreat, he ſhou'd, after giving God

God thanks for the Graces therein receiv'd, make a Preſent to our Lord, of all the good Reſolutions he had made in it; which he ought then to renew with greater Sincerity: Praying the ever Bleſſed Virgin *Mary* to be our Mediatrix to her Dear Son, that he wou'd grant us the Grace of being Faithful, and to beſeech her at the ſame time to be Caution for that Fidelity, which ſhe her ſelf is to obtain for us.

But yet one muſt not ſo truſt in the good Diſpoſitions he may poſſibly find himſelf in, as not to diſtruſt more his own Weakneſs and Infirmity; nothing being more to be fear'd than too great a Security.

'Tis not of the leaſt importance, to watch and keep our ſelves at firſt upon our Guard, eſpecially the firſt three or four Hours, or as many Days, if the Reteat be of Eight or Ten Days continuance. After which it will be eaſie, and coſt little to continue Faithful, the firſt ſteps are the moſt difficult: And the moſt efficacious means to keep up a Mans Fervor, is immediately, from the firſt ſetting out, to declare himſelf for Vertue.

# A MEDITATION TO

## *Diſpoſe on's ſelf to a Retreat.*

THE Subject of this Meditation is taken out of the Parable in the thirteenth of Saint *Luke*, where 'tis ſayd, that the Maſter of the Family coming to look for Fruit on a Fig-Tree, which he had Planted in his Garden, and finding none, ſayd to the Gardener, behold this is the third Year that I have ſought for Fruit on this Fig-Tree and found none: Cut it down therefore, why ſhou'd it any longer cumber the Ground: But the Gardener Anſwer'd him ſaying, Maſter, ſuffer it this Year alſo to remain, I will Cultivate and Digg about it, and if my Labor proves ineffectual, I will then cut it down.

It is not hard to comprehend what our Saviour wou'd have us to underſtand by this Parable. We muſt conſider it with attention, and endeavour to Penetrate and Weigh well the Senſe of it, to which the following Reflections may Contribute.

*I. POINT.*

## *I. POINT.*

CONſider with what care God has hitherto, all along Cultivated us, to make us bring forth Fruit. We came into the World, not only as a Barren Tree, but alſo as a Tree Spoil'd, Blaſted Originally by Sin and fit for nothing but to be hewn down and caſt into Hell Fire: God, thro' his ſingular Mercy, has, preferably to ſo many others, tranſplanted us, as one may ſay, into his Church by making us Chriſtians, or into the Fertil field of Religion, in caſe he has, by a yet more loving Act of Providence, given us the Grace to have choſen this State of Life.

Have we ever well conſider'd the advantage we have by being as it were Tranſplanted into ſo Holy a Soil, Cultivated by the Labors, and Bedew'd and Water'd with the Sweat and the Blood of the God-Man? 'Tis this advantage that has produc'd the Hero's of Chriſtianity, and that Daily makes ſo many great Saints, of every Age, Sex and Condition in the World. Theſe great Souls with the ſame Pruning and Labor, that is to ſay, the ſame Succours that we have had, have brought and yet Daily do bring forth fruits worthy of Eternal Life; theſe great Saints have not had any other Goſpel, or any other Sacraments; Grace was never wanting, but is always ſufficient; and they had no other Rules than thoſe which we have had; but they were indeed a little more

Faithful in obſerving thoſe Rules, by the Obſervation of which alone, it was that they became great Saints: We have had beſides, the advantage of their good Examples, and from time to time many ſeaſonable helps which they had not.

Let us add to all theſe advantages, the particular Benefits which we have receiv'd; let us call to mind the ſpecial care God has taken of us to make us bring forth Fruit: Oh the good Thoughts, the good Reſolutions, which we have had ſince we came to the uſe of Reaſon! Are all the Favors God has done us from the time of our entring into his Service to be numbred? How often has he fed us with the Bread of Angels, that is to ſay, with his own Fleſh and with his Blood? How often has he touch'd us and made his Words ſink deep, into the bottom of our Hearts? Oh what ſupernatural Lights has he given us, what Favors and Conſolations in Spiritual Retreats and Communions? Beſides a hundred other ſingular Graces which God has heap'd upon us.

So many were not neceſſary to make a great Saint; and there are many Saints in Heaven that have not had all the advantages which we have had: And yet notwithſtanding they brought forth Fruit in Abundance; they knew how to value, and make an extraordinary uſe of the Talents they had Receiv'd; their Lives were Fertil in good Works, and being full of Merit, they now enjoy an Eternal Happineſs, the juſt Reward

ward of their Fidelity. Let us now conſider ſincerely and in good earneſt; whether we, who have receiv'd as advantagious a Manurement as they, have been ſuch Fruitful Trees as they have been; and whether the Blood of JESUS CHRIST, wherewith we have been often water'd, has produc'd much Fruit in us.

## *II. POINT.*

CONſider that by the Fruit which God requires of us, is not meant ſome certain Barren Practices of Devotion, and certain outſides of Vertue, which commonly ſerve but to amuſe Imperfect Perſons; who with all theſe pretended good Works, paſs their whole Life in Luke-warmneſs without mending one ſingle Fault: The ſeeming Vertues of ſuch ſort of People, are at beſt but Leaves; that is to ſay, Fair, Specious Outſides which deceive Men, and which alſo deceive themſelves, by making them take the effects of Paſſion, Human Reſpect, Education, or their Natural Temper for True and Real Vertue.

By theſe ſorts of Fruit, which Saint *John* call's Fruits worthy of Repentance, and which Saint Paul call's Fruits of the Holy Ghoſt, are meant the effects of a true Love of God, and of Perfect Charity towards our Neighbour: We alſo underſtand by them, the Fruits which a ſolid Piety produces, that is to ſay, an extream horror of the ſmaleſt Sins, an unſatiable Hunger after

Justice, a constant and universal Mortification, a profound Humility, and a great exactness in all the Duties of our State and Condition; a mighty aversion for every thing our Saviour Hates, and a particular esteem for every thing he Loves; by these Fruits are likewise meant a compleat Victory over our Passions, and an intire Reformation of our Conduct and Manners; this is the sense of these Words, * *Bring forth Fruit worthy of Repentance;* that is to say, shew by your good Works, and by all your Actions that you are truly and perfectly Converted.

* Facite ergo fructum dignum pœnitentiæ.

Let us now consider whether we have hitherto brought forth much of this kind of Fruit. God has not been wanting to Cultivate or Dress us with a great deal of Care: He has been above these three Years, nay above ten to make us Fruitful: Much fewer Graces might in less time have made great Saints, and all these together have not yet perhaps been able to make one good Religious Man, or one Perfect Christian. 'Tis not the Fault of the Soil wherein I am Planted; 'tis Holy Ground and bears a hundred Fold; and how many do I find even amongst those with whom I live, who with much less Manuring, bring forth much more and greater abundance of Fruit?

What advantages have I got by so many Masses, and so many Communions? One alone is able to raise a Man up to a most sublime Perfection: I have already Communicated perhaps above two hundred

times

times, yet without mending one of my Faults. After ſo many Acts of Devotion, am I become the more Humble, more Regular, more Mortified, more Exact, or a greater Lover of JESUS CHRIST?

What are become of all the many good Thoughts I have formerly had? Where is that Fervor, that Peace, that true Pleaſure which I found in all my Exerciſes of Piety? What are become of all my good Reſolutions? where is the Fruit of all my Promiſes? Alas, alas! Of all theſe perhaps there remains nothing but a ſad Remembrance, which ſerves for nothing but to let us ſee how far we are from the State we ought to be in.

Are we not become ſo much the more ungrateful to God by how much the more we have been oblig'd to him? And may it not be ſayd, that the care he has taken to Cultivate and Dreſs us, has only ſerv'd to render us the more Barren and the more Unfruitful?

But that which ought to make us Lament yet more, is that after having ſpent Ten or Twenty Years in the way of Perfection, we ſhou'd perhaps have cauſe to eſteem our ſelves Happy, if we were now but as far advanc'd as we were at our firſt ſetting out. Yet ſtill the Years run on, Time paſſes away, and the Maſter of the Family, tir'd with the Pains he has taken in Vain to Cultivate and make a Barren Tree Fruitful, has reſolv'd to have it cut down and caſt into the Fire.

*III. POINT.*

## *III. POINT.*

CONsider the danger we run by leading an Unfruitful Life, and how much we ought to dread Drawing down upon us the Vengeance of God, and that terrible Sentence of Reprobation, which was given againſt the Barren Tree.

Conſider how many Graces we have depriv'd our ſelves of, and how many we have loſt? Thoſe very Graces, that were the Fruit of the Blood of JESUS CHRIST, which we by our Infidelity, have made of no effect, might have Converted Pagans, and multiply'd in Heaven the number of the Saints; after increaſing in the Church the number of the Truly Faithful.

Our Saviour has for many Years come to ſee if he cou'd find any Fruit in us, but he has been always diſappointed in his Expectation, having never found any thing but Leaves, or elſe Fruit like that of *Gomorrha*, which under a fair Rind or Skin, cover'd nothing but Rottenneſs, Duſt and Aſhes: Has he not therefore Reaſon to Reproach us as he did the Vine in the Prophet. † *What more*, ſayd he, *cou'd I have done for my Vine which I have not done?* I had reaſon, conſidering the care and pains I have taken to prune it, to expect from it good Grapes, and yet it has only brought forth a few wild Grapes. Has not CHRIST cauſe to Reproach us now after the ſame manner?

† Quid eſt quod debui ultra facere vineæ meæ & non feci.

And

And what Anſwer cou'd we be able to make to a Reproach ſo juſt?

But yet let us more fear the juſt Puniſhment with which he threatens ſo Unfruitful a Vine. * *And I will now ſhew you what I will do to my Vine: I will pluck up the Hedge that I have Planted round about it, and will leave it a Prey to all Paſſengers without a Wall, without a Ditch and without a Hedge:* It ſhall be trodden under-foot and become a High-way; it ſhall be no more Cultivated, nor bring forth any thing but Briars and Thorns: And that it may be for ever Deſtroy'd, I will Command the Cloud's to Rain no more upon ſo ungrateful a Soil, upon a Vine that brings forth nothing but bad Fruit.

* Et nunc oſtendam vobis quid ego faciam Vineæ. Auferam ſepem ejus & erit in direptionem.

The meaning of theſe Expreſſions is very eaſie, let us but make the Application; we have abus'd God's greateſt Graces; we have hitherto brought forth nothing but Leaves or baſe Corrupted Fruit. God will deprive us of theſe great Succours which we make ineffectual; this Hedge being once remov'd, and this inward Recollection loſt, the Soul will expoſe or let it ſelf looſe indifferently to all ſorts of Objects, it will become as it were a Prey to all Paſſions; God will no more move us, nor Enter into the Bottom of our Hearts; the wholeſome, ſaving Advices of a Wiſe and Zealous Director, will no more make Impreſſion on us; the Source and Fountain of Grace will be dry'd up; and what ſhall become of a Soul in this ſad and wretched Condition? But this notwithſtanding

withstanding, is what is to be expected by these Barren Souls that bear no Fruit.

Is not the danger to be fear'd of becoming like an unfruitful Branch, which being separated from the Vine, Drys Withers, and is no longer of any use, or fit for any thing but to be thrown into the Fire? Do we not remember that the Lazy Servant was Condemn'd, not for having lost the Talent, but for not having put it unto Interest, and gain'd an advantage by it; not for having brought forth no Fruit, but for not having brought forth good Fruit.

We fancy that God will wait longer for us, and * *Yet perhaps the Ax is already layd to the Root of the Tree:* This perhaps is the last time his Grace will solicit us, the last time he will press us, or give us the means to come out of this Barren and Unfruitful State: God has of a long time waited for us, advis'd us and solicited us; has so often come, and always in vain, to seek for Fruit from a Tree he has taken so much Care and Pains about, that justly Offended at so long a Barrenness, he is perhaps going to pronounce against us the Sentence, which the Master Pronoune'd against the Fig-Tree: † *Let this naughty useless Tree be cut down and cast into the Fire; why shou'd it any longer cumber the Ground*, and take up the place of another Tree that may bring forth good Fruit.

* Jam enim securis ad radicem arboris posita est.

† Succidite ergo illam ut quid etiam terram occupat?

The consequence of this Terrible Sentence has been, that many Persons who began well, but did not make a right use of the Graces

Graces given them, have made an ill End: And that many others who were ſufficiently Called, had not the gift of Perſeverance; but were forc'd to give their Place and Crown to Men that became gainers by their misfortunes. Have not we reaſon to apprehend the ſame kind of treatment, after all that God has hitherto done to make us bear a great deal of Fruit? Have we made a ſuitable return to the Care and Pains he has taken? Were not the few good Works that we have done Corrupted by Wicked Motives? And therefore can we Brag of being very Rich either in Vertue or Merit?

Alas Lord! Enter not into Judgment with thy Servant; becauſe that no Body on Earth can appear Innocent in your Eyes. I am perſwaded that I have hitherto been not only a Barren and Unfruitful Tree, but alſo a Wicked and Corrupted one: That I have unprofitably taken up a place in a Fruitful Field, and by conſequence am only fit to be hewn down and caſt into the Fire: † *But have Patience with me;* not for one Year, but for one Day, and I hope, with the help of your Grace, to make ſo good uſe of this Day, that I ſhall render your care no longer ineffectual.

† Patientiam habe in me.

I even dare perſwade my ſelf that you wou'd never have given me either the Thought, or the Will, or the Time, to make this Retreat, if you had not reſolv'd to Defer, at leaſt, to Suſpend the Puniſhment, I have deſerv'd for my Diſobedience to your Grace, and the ill uſe I have made

of

of the many Succours you have been pleas'd to afford me. Perhaps this is the only Day that ſhall ever be allow'd me, and that if I do not make uſe of it, you will Pronounce againſt me the terrible Sentence I have reaſon to Believe and more to Fear; But I have Confidence in your Mercy, and hope, that from the Reſolution I have made of profiting by this Day, altho' it ſhou'd be the laſt of my Life, I ſhou'd at leaſt reap the Comfort of being able to preſent you the Fruit of this laſt Day.

THE

# THE FIRST MEDITATION. OF The End of Man.

## I. Point.

### *Man was Created to serve God.*

CONSIDER that we are not come into the World by Chance; God had an End in bringing us out of Nothing; and this End was nothing else but his Glory: He Created us only to know him, to Love him, and to Serve him; we Glorifie God by Knowing and by Loving him: We shew our Love by serving him, and we serve him by keeping his Commandments. *January and July.*

This is the End for which God Created us: It was in his Power not to have Created us, but he cou'd not have Created us for any

*January* and *July.*

any other End but this. The irregularity of our Manners may well make us forget our Duty, but it cannot change our laſt End; how irregular ſoever we may be, it will always be true, that we are not come into the World to heap up Riches, to acquire Honor, to enjoy Pleaſure, and to make our ſelves great Fortunes: No, no, we are come only to Serve God.

The King and the Subject, the Learn'd and Ignorant, the Rich and the Poor, are come into the World for no other End but this; tho' Men are of different States and Conditions, and tho' there is ſo great a Subordination among them, tho' ſome are Born Maſters and others Servants, yet notwithſtanding, all are made for one and the ſame laſt End, and all agree in this Point, that they are Created only to Know God, to Love him and to Serve him.

The Fire is not more made to Warm, nor the Sun to give Light, than Man to Love God and to Serve him. Nor is it but to help us to arrive at this laſt End, that God has Created ſuch an almoſt Infinite number of Creatures as he has done: There not being any one of them which taken in it ſelf, do's not furniſh us with Reaſons to know him, Motives to Love him, and Means to Serve him.

To convince us of this Truth, we need not go farther; nor conſult any other than our own Hearts; the extream Paſſion which we all have to be Happy, and the abſolute inability we are under, of becoming ſo on Earth,

Earth, makes us know ſenſibly enuff, that Man was not made for Created Objects: It is neceſſary for him to lift himſelf up to God, and from the Moment that he do's ſo, he finds a full and perfect Peace, which alone is able to fix all his Deſires; and from that Minute taſts a Sweetneſs he cou'd not find elſewhere; a moſt evident ſign that God is his End and the Center of Man's Reſt and Happineſs. You have Created us O Lord for your ſelf and our Heart can find no repoſe but in you. *January and July.*

We are come into the World then only to ſerve God; this, this alone is the End for which all Men were Made: But do all Men Live up to and for this End? This is the one only neceſſary thing the Son of God tells us of in the Goſpel; but do Men look upon and conſider it as ſuch?

How earneſtly do Men ſtrive and ſtruggle to compaſs their deſigns in the World, to diſcharge their Imployments as they ought, and to ſucceed in the Service of their Prince? Do they Labor as much, or take the ſame pains to ſerve God? To conſider the Conduct of the greateſt part of Man-kind, wou'd not one think that Men were Made rather for any other thing than for God? How often do's the quality of a Servant of God, give place to that of the Robe, a Lawyer, or a Swords-Man? How often do the Maxims of the World prevail over the Duties of a Chriſtian? Every one has his own deſigns and purſues his own Ends. It muſt needs therefore follow that we

*January* and *July.*

we are but ſlenderly, if at all perſwaded, that God is our laſt End, ſince our Pains are ſo ſmall and our Actions have ſo little tendency that way.

There is not in Chriſtianity a Truth we ſooner learn than that of the End of Man; nor is there any we think leſs of, or when we do think of it, that we are leſs concern'd for; as much accuſtom'd as we are to hear, almoſt from the Cradle, that Man was Created only to ſerve God, yet we are not at all mov'd at the ſignification of of theſe Words; the ſenſe of which we have not perhaps fully div'd into, and much leſs foreſeen the conſequences of them. For if it be true, that I am come into the World for no other End but to Serve God, there ought not to be one ſingle Action of my Life which ſome way or other ſhou'd not relate or tend to his Honor or his Service; and yet I know not whether in all my Life, I have ever done any one thing for the ſake of God alone.

This is the Main the Fundamental Point of our Religion, but do we Live conformably to this important Truth? It is the chief Maxim of the Goſpel, every thing depends on it, it is the baſis, the ground of all the reſt, and yet, to conſider our Senſe of it, as to our Conduct and our Manners, it can hardly be ſaid, that God is our laſt End. Men think of every thing, but ſince they ſcarcely think of God, may it not be ſaid, that God paſſes, or is accounted for nothing?

Men

Men find time for every thing, except to Love God and to ſerve him, Wealth, Honor, Pleaſure, all things charm us, God alone has no Attractives no Allurements for us: And yet notwithſtanding is any true Pleaſure to be found but in God alone? * *Thou haſt made us Lord*, ſaid Saint *Auſtin*, *for thy ſelf and our Hearts will ever be reſtleſs and in motion till they fix and ſettle themſelves on thee.* *January* and *July*.

* Feciſti nos Domine ad te & inquietum eſt cor noſtrum donec requieſcat in te.

Have we not a thouſand times experienc'd this truth in the things we have moſt Paſſionately wiſh'd for? Were we ever ſatisfi'd or content when we had obtain'd them? Was not the very enjoyment of them, often ſufficient to make us deſpiſe and be diſguſted at 'em? It is to much purpoſe indeed to endeavour to make our ſelves Inſenſible, that we may Err and Wander with leſs Fear; this very diſguſt, this inward diſquiet, which all our Life long we continually almoſt fail in, is a ſecret Voice that tels us, we are not made for Created Beings, that on Earth there is nothing but Amuſements, Vanity and Vexation of Spirit, and that we were made for God only.

It is not in our Choice or Power to ſet aſide this End, and ſubſtitute another in it's place, he that gave us our Being has annex'd to it an unalterable Obligation of Returning to him. And if it had been in our own Election to have taken God, this Infinite Good, for our laſt End, cou'd we poſſibly have thought of chooſing any other? And tho' God himſelf has put us under

*January* and *July.*

under this happy neceſſity of not being able to have any other, yet do we take very little Care or Pains how to attain him, and to arrive at our laſt End.

Ungrateful Man that you are, who, having God for your laſt End, do yet halt between two ways: How long, how long alas will you remain divided? * *Why will you divide your ſelves between God and the World? If God be your only Lord, why do you not wholly and only Serve him?*

* Uſque quo claudicatis in duas partes? Si Dominus eſt Deus, ſequimini eum.

What do I wait for Lord, that I ſhou'd not immediately reſolve upon it? Have I too much Health, or am I yet too Young? Or what, am I affraid to Serve you too long, If I ſhou'd now begin; I who am come into the World for no other End, but to Serve you?

Alas, alas! I did not deliberate even when I had the beſt Years of my Life to chooſe, I ſpent them in vain amuſements and the ſervice of the World, and now convinc'd as I am of my former Folly, and ſenſible of all my wanderings and Errors, I am yet diſputing with you the ſmall remainder of my Life, and in doubt whether I ſhou'd begin from this moment, to Love no more any thing but your ſelf.

It is ſtrange that I ſhou'd ſtand in need of ſo many Reaſons and ſo many Reflections to determin me in a matter of this importance, and of the neceſſity of which I am fully convinc'd! But it is yet more ſtrange that I ſhou'd make all theſe Reflections and not determin my ſelf?

Do

Do I wait for my being reduc'd to the last extremity? For the fatal hour, when Men shall come to tell me I have but a very few Days left wherein to bethink me seriously of my Conversion? *January and July.*

It is enuff, Lord you have made me for your self alone, and I also now resolve to be hereafter wholly yours. It is true I begin to Love and Serve you late, but whenever I Dy I shall at least have the Comfort to find I have begun. *Serò te amavi. &c. S. Aug.*

C II. Point.

## II. Point.

### *Man was Created that by Serving God he might Save himself.*

*January* and *July.*

CONSIDER that God, who Created us for no other Reaſon but that we might ſerve him, was pleas'd, thro' his moſt particular Goodneſs, ſo to order matters, that we cannot ſerve him without ſaving our ſelves. By Creating us for his Glory, he deſign'd from the beginning our Eternal Happineſs; and as this Happineſs is not propos'd to us but under the title of a Reward, ſo our whole Life is not given us for any other End but to Merit it. It is for this End that God has given us his Laws, his Commandments: And that Natural Inſtinct, which incites all Men to deſire and ſearch for Happineſs, gives us notice even amidſt our greateſt Diſorders, that our buſineſs here on Earth is but to Labour to be Eternally Happy in Heaven. Do's not the Remorſe of Conſcience, which is never almoſt ſmother'd, tell us loud enuff, from the very Moment we go never ſo little aſtray, that we are running headlong the broad way to our Deſtruction? And is not the fear of Hell, and

and the terrible Judgments of God, of which the moſt determin'd Sinners want not a Senſe, a Voice loud enuff to tell us, as it do's without ceaſing, that we are ſent into this World for no other End but to Save our ſelves. *January and July.*

This, and this alone, is the great buſineſs of all Mankind; it is our laſt End: A Man is not ſent into the World to have this or that Employment; to be rais'd to ſuch or ſuch a Dignity and to be Remarkable in it; to excell in ſome one Art, or gain a Reputation by his Merit. No, no; God has not exalted you to this Honor or that Employment, nor given you thoſe good Qualities, this Succeſs, and this Merit, but as ſo many means to help you to Save your ſelf and enable you the more eaſily to arrive at this laſt End.

We are not then Created, but to Save our ſelves; that is to ſay, to avoid Hell and endleſs Torments, to gain Paradiſe and eternal Happineſs. And we are here on Earth but as Baniſh'd Men, or at beſt but as Travellers, who Daily rejoyce to ſee themſelves come nearer and nearer to the end of their Journey, or the prefix'd time of their Baniſhment.

But do we entertain our ſelves with ſuch Thoughts as theſe while we are on Earth? And do we thus Conſider and Regard Heaven? Can it be ſaid upon a ſtrict Examination of our Conduct, that we look upon Salvation as our laſt End? No, no; ſince every Man knows how to take the

*January* and *July.*

measures that are moſt proper for attaining his Ends, it muſt be concluded there are not many that propoſe Salvation for their laſt End, ſince there are ſo very few, that take the right means to obtain it.

It is eaſie to perceive what End the Merchant propoſes to himſelf by his Traffic, the Witty Man by his Studies, the Courtier by his Comportment, and the Brave by the Hazards he Daily expoſes himſelf to: But is it to be ſeen as plainly, that every Man in his Station and Employment, thinks of nothing ſo ſeriouſly, as how to Save himſelf? Or that he propoſes God only for the laſt End of all his Actions?

In the mean time what do's it advantage a Man to make a great Fortune, to gain the whole World, if he loſe his own Soul, and what exchange can he make to recompenſe this loſs? It had been better for him never to have been, than not to have wrought out his own Salvation.

Let us remember and reflect that if we do not make God our chief Soverain Good, he will prove our chiefeſt Evil; there is no other thing of what kind ſoever but a Man may bear the want of; but the want of that Soverain Good, no one can bear; or be Satisfi'd, or Contented without it: A poor unfortunate Man in Miſery and Obſcurity, abandon'd and forgotten by all, if he do but Save himſelf, is for ever Happy, and has need of nothing: But a Rich Man Fortunate and Honor'd in this World,

World, if he Damn himſelf, is Miſerable for all Eternity.

*January* and *July.*

What advantage is it to the great Wits, to the moſt extraordinary Men, to have fill'd the World with the Fame of their great Actions, and to have acquir'd ſo much Honor and Reputation, if they are Damn'd? Repreſent to your ſelf a Man juſt Dying who had poſſeſs'd immenſe Riches, and enjoy'd all kind of Pleaſures, who had arriv'd at the height of Glory and Greatneſs, and who having ſucceeded in every thing, had only neglected the buſineſs of his Salvation; and ask him then, * *What good*, do's all that Wealth, all thoſe Pleaſures, and all that Greatneſs now do you? Theſe are all paſt and gone, and ſignifie no more to you, than if they had never been; but alas your Soul, which you have loſt and deſtroy'd, will not paſs away, and the terrible Pains and Torments which are the ſad conſequences of that loſs, will remain for Ever and Ever.

* Quid proficit.

Let us fancy our ſelves brought to this laſt Moment, and conſider what Thoughts or Opinion we ſhall then have, of all thoſe things which at this time are the obſtacles of our Salvation? What looks ſhall we caſt on all thoſe fine Deſigns, all thoſe great projects, upon which we have ſpent and thrown away all our time and all our care?

A Man will run the hazard of looſing his Soul rather than diſoblige his Friend, or leave his Children a leſs Fortune, or be

*January* and *July.*

himſelf leſs remarkable in his Life time; what will be his Senſe of all theſe things when he comes to Dy? Will the remembrance of paſt Honors give much Comfort to a Man that is going to be Damnd? Will theſe pretended Friends own themſelves much oblig'd to us, for having deſtroy'd our ſelves to do them a Pleaſure? Or ſhall we our ſelves be very thankful to thoſe who have been the occaſion or the cauſe of our loſs, and for whoſe ſake we are Damnd?

Thou Poor Man who do'ſt Toyl and Sweat, and wear out thy Life and Health in Labor and Trouble, to leave thy Children Rich and at Eaſe, who will recompenſe or thank thee for thy loſs? If to be Rich depended but upon a Mans ſeriouſly deſiring to be ſo, who wou'd not be Rich? It depends upon us, with the aſſiſtance of Grace which we never want, to be Saints; and yet Men eſteem it a trouble even to deſire to be ſo; and to ſpeak properly a Man is not a Saint for any other Reaſon, but becauſe he do's not deſire to be a Saint.

It is a very ſurpriſing thing that Men who Love themſelves ſo much, ſhou'd ſo little reflect upon a Truth of this Conſequence; and it is not a little ſtrange to ſee, that Perſons Wiſe enuff in other things, and ſufficiently Prudent in their Conduct, ſhou'd go out of the World, without having almoſt ever thought, why they came into it, whence they are come, and whither they are to go after this Life: But upon

upon ſome ſmall appearance of Converſion at the laſt hour, never reckon their State dangerous, nor be willing to liſten to the fearful Notions, the dreadful Summons of Death ought then to Inſpire. *January and July.*

What is become Lord of that Paſſionate deſire of our Salvation, which made you do ſuch great things for us? It ſeems my God that you are no longer concern'd for the loſs of thoſe whom you have purchas'd with your Blood. How long will you ſuffer Souls which have coſt you ſo dear, to deſtroy themſelves irrecoverably? Are you not ſtill our God, and are we not ſtill your People? And can you ever forget that you are my Saviour, my Redeemer? It is true, that I knew not how to make the advantage I ought, of the good Fortune I had, in being made only for you. That, far from making uſe of the Creatures, to help me to go to you, I have quite forgotten you, that I might altogether dwell with them. I have gone aſtray from the way which wou'd have carried me to my laſt End; and wou'd not hearken to the Voice of the good Shepherd that call'd to me. But I acknowledge and bewail my wanderings, and however unfaithful and diſobedient I have been, this is enuff, to make me Hope, that you will have Mercy on me: You Lov'd me Lord, when I Lov'd not you, even then, when I did all I cou'd to oblige you not to Love me. You ſought for me, even when I fled ſo much the more from you. And what my

*January* and *July.*

God, now that I desire to Love you, will you now refuse me and cast me off? Now that I am searching for you, will you hide your self, or fly from me? My God I cannot entertain such a thought, of so Good, so Merciful a God as you are.

There's an end on't Lord; I acknowledge that I am only made to Love and Serve you; and I am resolv'd, with the help of your Grace, to do both the one and the other; and I Hope, since you have hitherto had so much Patience as to bear with my wanderings, that you will now have so much goodness as to Pardon me.

THE

# THE SECOND MEDITATION.

## OF

## The means we have to arrive at our laſt End.

### I. Point.

*Of the means that are Common to all Chriſtians.*

CONSIDER that God was not only content to Create us for himſelf; but alſo further pleas'd and deſirous, by an exceſs of Goodneſs, to engage us indiſpenſably to go to him, by the great number of means he has given us for the attainment of our laſt End. There is not a Creature taken by it ſelf, which do's not furniſh us with means to Know and to *January* and *July.*

*January* and *July.*

Love God; and if any of them become an obſtacle, it is only by our abuſing them. The Good things and the Evil of this Life, even the Chaſtiſements, which God makes uſe of to puniſh our Infidelities, may be made uſeful to us. There is not a more Mortal Enemy of our Salvation than the Devil; and yet notwithſtanding, his very Tricks and Temptations may be made ſerviceable to our Salvation.

We muſt of neceſſity have Grace to arrive at our laſt End: Without that, all our Efforts and Endeavours will prove Vain and Uſeleſs. It is an Article of Faith, that we may be wanting to Grace, but that Grace, how irregular ſoever we may be, will never be wanting to us; and there is not one Man Damn'd, for any other Reaſon, but becauſe he wou'd be Damn'd.

We are Weak, occaſions are Frequent, and by the Corruption of Mans Heart thro' Sin, we have all of us a ſtrong leaning, a furious inclination to Evil. But can there be greater Helps, more powerful Succours than we have, to hinder us from Falling, or when Fallen to Recover and Raiſe us up again? Have we ever well conſider'd, how eaſie it is, to work out our Salvation, if we wou'd but make uſe of the great means we have to be Sav'd? So many Sacraments, whereby all the Merits of JESUS CHRIST are applied to us; Sacraments, whereby we are, as one may ſay, Bath'd in his Blood, and by which, the Precious Body and Blood of our Lord

Lord becomes the Food of our Souls; are not theſe ſufficient and effectual means, to enable us to arrive infallibly at our laſt End? *January and July.*

It was eaſie for the Diſciples of JESUS to be Saints, by having this Divine Savior continually with them; and is it more difficult for us who have him ſtill continually with us? They were happy, in being able to obtain what they moſt ardently deſir'd: Can we be ſayd to be leſs happy, in poſſeſſing JESUS CHRIST in the *Euchariſt*? And I pray what do's it ſtick at, if we alſo obtain not our deſires?

Prayer is one of the moſt efficacious means: Since CHRIST himſelf has ſolemnly engag'd, to grant us all that we ſhall ask in his Name; he has excepted nothing in his Promiſes; and theſe Promiſes he has made indifferently, to all ſorts of People: All we have to do, is but to ask; and who is it that knows not how to ask? And in truth our Salvation, and Eternal Reward, is worth very little, if it be not worth asking.

Altho' we ſhou'd have had but the Sacrifice of the Altar alone, ought we not to have accounted our ſelves ſure of our Salvation? What Grace, what powerful Succours can we be thought to want, which God, offer'd as the Price of theſe Graces, is not capable of obtaining? And after ſo often repeated aſſurances of his being willing to do us Good, can it be poſſible, that he ſhou'd refuſe us? It is true, that

*January and July.*

we owe a great deal to the Juſtice of God, and that we have need of extraordinary Aſſiſtances; but do's not one ſingle Communion, one Maſs furniſh us with ſufficient means to pay thoſe Debts, to ſatisfie all our needs? Have we not an Offering which cannot but be acceptable to God, an Offering able to blot out all the Sins of Men? And what hinders that it do's not blot out mine?

To ſpeak truth, if it had been in our Power, or if we had had the Liberty of chooſing the moſt proper means for our Salvation, cou'd we ever have choſen ſo powerful, ſo eaſie, and ſo many as we have? And cou'd it ever have enter'd into our Heads to have deſir'd, what CHRIST himſelf has been pleas'd to do in favor of us? And yet notwithſtanding, what profit have we hitherto made of all theſe means? Nay on the contrary, are there not ſigns enuff, that we have not at all profited by them?

We muſt have but very little deſire to be ſav'd, when we damn our ſelves with means ſo eaſie and ſo efficacious, as thoſe we have, for our Salvation; what excuſe ſhall we have, what never ſo little plauſible pretext can we give, if we are wanting to our ſelves in this great affair?

What ſhall we have to anſwer to the Reproach the Infidels will bring upon us, to that which our Saviour himſelf will lay upon us, by making uſe of the Example even of Heathens to confound us Chriſtians?

Of

Of whom very many have eſteem'd above all things, Vertue, and abhor'd Vice: And were Devout even to Superſtition; and this only in hopes of a vain Repuration, and a ridiculous Recompence: What wou'd they have done, if they Believ'd as we Believe, and had had the ſame helps which we Chriſtians have? *January and July.*

Oh what regret muſt this be to a Chriſtian, that Damns himſelf with all theſe Succours! What will it ſignifie to have had ſuch means, if I am Damn'd? And what muſt I expect, if I do not make better uſe of theſe means for the time to come, than I have done for the time paſt?

## II. POINT.

# II. Point.

## *Of the means that every one has in Particular.*

*January and July.*

CONSIDER that beſides theſe great Succours common to all Chriſtians, we have all, every one in Particular, means very proper and very eaſie to arrive at a moſt Sublime Sanctity: Our Natural Temper, Education and Wit; nay even our Paſſions themſelves, become greatly helpful, when we know how to make a Right uſe of them: Theſe are the Foundation upon which Grace do's ordinarily Build; and whether our Inclinations carry us to Good, or whether they lead us to Evil, if our Will be but right it will turn all to Vertue.

Our Diſeaſes and the particular Accidents of our Lives, happen to us for no other Reaſon, but to make us haſten the more to our laſt End, by ſeparating us, or at leaſt, by making us diſreliſh a hundred Created Objects, which poſſeſs'd, amuſe us long, and always ſtop us in our courſe to Heaven.

But the ſureſt and moſt effectual means for our Salvation are thoſe, which every Man finds in the State and Condition that God

God has call'd him to. All the States of Life are ſo many different ways, which, according to the order of Providence, lead all Mankind to their laſt End. It is a groſs Error to imagine, that to arrive at a high Degree of Perfection, it is neceſſary for one to do extraordinary things. To become a great Saint, there is nothing more requir'd from a Man, but to acquit himſelf perfectly in all the Duties of his Station. The Couragious Woman, the Heroine ſo highly eſteem'd and commended in Scripture, acquir'd all thoſe praiſes by nothing elſe, but by the care ſhe took of her Family: And JESUS CHRIST himſelf judg'd, that he cou'd do nothing more becoming and more worthy of his Character, than, for the Thirty Years he Liv'd on Earth, to acquit himſelf perfectly of all the moſt ordinary Offices, incident and belonging to the Poor and Humble condition of that Life, which he had choſen. *January* and *July.*

This is the certain Way, and he muſt needs go aſtray that follows any other. It is a meer Illuſion and a Deceit, to deſire to do a great deal, if we do not do what we are bound to do; and we are ſure of doing what we are bound to do, when we do all that God wou'd have us do; and we are ſure of doing that which will pleaſe him, when we acquit our ſelves of the ſmalleſt duties, we are bound to, by the circumſtance of our State and Condition.

Lay-

*January* and *July.*

Lay-People, without exceeding the Limits of their calling or State of Life, in doing what they are oblig'd to do Daily, will meet with neceſſary occaſions, to make them Saints: Shall they then be excuſable in the Sight of God, if they do not lay hold on theſe occaſions? They who do much more for the World, than they are oblig'd to do for God, or to be Sav'd, which is all one and the ſelf ſame thing?

Religious Perſons find, in their State of Life, all the means, and the only means, proper for their attaining a moſt Sublime Perfection, by the exact obſervance of their Rules and their Vows. The Saints of their own Order, whom they Honour, were made Saints by the Perfect Obſervation of thoſe very Rules; and it is by this way alone, and no other, that they themſelves ought to hope to become Saints.

And let them not ſay that thoſe ſeem not to be of any conſequence, or that they do not oblige under pain of Sin: For beſides that there is nothing little in the Service of God, have we not Enter'd into Religion, only that we might Serve him Freely, and more Perfectly than if it were by Compulſion? And how ſhall we diſtinguiſh our ſelves from other Religious, but by the Obſervation of the Particular Duties of our own Order? And how ſhall we Merit the extraordinary Succours we ſtand in need of, but by the ſtrict Obſervation of our Rules?

It

It is matter of astonishment, that so many Communions, so many Masses, and so many powerful Assistances, shou'd, in a manner, stand us in no stead: We are still the more Luke-warm and have the greater Reason to apprehend our Salvation, altho' we seem to have so much advanc'd it. Whilst we neglect the particular means we have, all others will prove useless: The best Remedies do rather Hurt than do Good, if the smallest Precautions be neglected. *January and July.*

A Religious Person, that neglects his Rules, ought not to expect any profit from his Communions. And a Lay-Man, that takes no care of his Family, and acquits himself but very Imperfectly of the Duties and Obligations of the State wherein God has plac'd him, is to make no account of his other pretended good Works. A Servant will have no thanks, let him intend never so well, or do never so great Matters, if he neglects the things he is bound to do: And how can he do what he ought, when he do's not do what his Master wou'd have him?

Let us here seriously Reflect upon our Conduct: Let us Consider what use we have hitherto made of the means given us for our Salvation; what profit have we drawn from the General, or what Fruit from the Particular means which we have had?

God will not only Examin the Evil we have done, but will also Examin and Rigorously

*January* and *July.*

rouſly Puniſh, the Good which we have not done as we ought; and the Good, which we might have done, and did not do. Are we at this Moment, in a Condition to give an account of our whole Life? Wherein we ſhou'd not have done one ſingle Action, which ſhou'd not have had Reference to God: And yet, perhaps we ſhou'd be hard put to it; to find one ſingle Action, in our whole Life, which we had done only for God.

Let us find out what has been the cauſe of our reaping hitherto, ſo little Fruit, by our frequent Sacraments and Spiritual Exerciſes. Let us ſeriouſly Examin, what uſe we have made of all the means given us to attain Perfection: If we are engag'd in the World, in Temporal Affairs, how we have Perform'd the Duties of our Station; if we are call'd to an Eccleſiaſtic or Religious State of Life, how we have Obſerv'd the Rules, and acquitted our ſelves of our Obligations. By taking this courſe, it will be eaſie to conceive what ſincere Sorrow and Regret a Man ought to have for the time paſt, and what ſtrong and efficacious Reſolutions he ought to make, for the time to come.

THE

# THE THIRD MEDITATION.

## UPON

## The Thoughts which we ſhall have at the Hour of our Death.

### *The I. Prelude.*

TO fix your Thoughts the more eaſily, and to be the leſs Diſtracted, Imagine your ſelf now upon your Death Bed, and that you have but two or three Hours to Live. Fancy to your ſelf, what you will then in reality find, an extream Weakneſs, which makes you almoſt Motionleſs; a mighty Reſtleſſneſs, which allows you not a Moments Quiet; a frightful Apprehenſion, which diſturb's your Mind; frequent palpitations of a Dying Heart; ſuffocations and ſtoppings *January* and *July*.

*January* and *July.*

ſtoppings of the Breath; a cold Sweat all over the Body, which already begins to Smell like a Dead Carkaſs; hollow, fallen Cheeks; and an Earthly blewiſh Complexion; Hair all wet with the cold Sweats of Death; Eyes ſunk into the Head, and frightfully ſtaring without Motion, and juſt ready to Cloſe, leaving you but Light enuff to ſee, what a Lamentable Condition you are reduc'd to; already Abandon'd, and Forſaken by all that was moſt dear to you in this World; and forc'd to Expire and Breath your laſt in the Preſence of ſome few of your Servants, or other unknown Perſons.

## *For a Second Prelude.*

BEG of God to give you the Grace ſo to Conceive the Conſequences of this laſt Moment, on which Eternity depends, and ſo perfectly to enter into all the Thoughts you ſhall then have, as that you may now, from this very Minute, reſolve upon, and take ſuch certain Meaſures as may aſſure your ſelf of your Salvation.

I. Point

# I. Point.

## *Of the Thoughts which Looſe or Luk-warm Perſons will have at the Hour of Death.*

CONSIDER the ſtrange and wonderful alteration that is made in a Dying Perſon. It is but a very few Days ſince he was Strong and Healthful, full of new Projects, and Crown'd with Riches and Honour: And now behold the ſame Man, all of a ſudden, caſt down and confin'd to his Bed, reduc'd to the laſt extremity, without Strength and without Pleaſure; under a neceſſity of abandoning all, and of being abandon'd and forſaken by all: Ah Lord! What is Man? How Rich, how Powerful, how Uſeful ſoever he be; a Feaver of a few Hours, is enuff to render the whole World uſeleſs to him, and him uſeleſs to the whole World. *January* and *July.*

A Man accounts himſelf Happy in being ſecur'd of a Fortune to ſerve him for many Years; but my God! What do's it ſignifie to have a Fortune, ſufficient for many Years, if he has not many Years to enjoy this Fortune?

In this ſad and pittiful Condition, what is able to Comfort a Sinner? The Thoughts of

*January* and *July.*

of Pleaſures paſt, of which nothing remains, but a Deadly Sorrow; the Fear of future Torments, the Rigors of which he already feels; God, Men, and in one Word all things Conſpire to Afflict and Frighten him. What Wounds, if one may be allow'd to ſpeak ſo, do the Tears of the Standers by, the aſtoniſhment of thoſe that draw near, and even the ſilence of thoſe that retire, the ſighs of a Wife, and the crying of Children, and even the haſt and officiouſneſs of Servants, make in the Heart of a Dying Man? With what Fear and Apprehenſion do's he try and make uſe of the moſt Violent and Deſperate Remedies? But what Fright, what Confuſion is he in, if he finds no Eaſe by theſe laſt Remedies?

Then in all haſt a Confeſſor muſt be ſent for, to give this Sick Man ſome little Conſolation; but is it to be believ'd, that in this Extremity a Sinner is like to be much Comforted by the Preſence of his Confeſſor? He is in a cold Sweat, he looks earneſtly upon him, but is quite at a loſs what to ſay to him: Amidſt this Trouble and Confuſion he muſt diſpoſe himſelf for Death; but is this indeed a proper time for it? Is he now in a Condition to do it? And in this Fright and Trouble, which ſo much weakens and blinds his Reaſon, after what manner do's he do it? He expreſſes not what he underſtands, or what he thinks, but what he hears his Confeſſor ſay: And moſt commonly he neither

neither knows what he ſhou'd, nor what he do's Anſwer. *January and July.*

One may ſay that JESUS CHRIST himſelf, who by the laſt Viſit he makes, gives ſo much Comfort to the Juſt, comes not to Viſit the Sinner, but that he may in a more ſenſible manner Reproach him at this laſt hour with all his Sacrileges, his Profanations and Impieties: And in reality what effect is to be hop'd for, from the laſt Sacraments, when they are Receiv'd with ſo bad Diſpoſitions?

But from whom ſhall they receive any Comfort? For as ſoon as the laſt Sacraments are Adminiſtred, their neareſt Relations withdraw, and their beſt Friends appear no more: But let us conſider what Thoughts this Dying Perſon muſt needs have, when the Prieſt, before he takes leave of him, preſenting a Crucifix, tells him that all Remedies being now become uſeleſs, and all Creatures abandoning him at this laſt hour, he ought to make for the future, JESUS CHRIST only, his whole Refuge and Comfort: You are no more, ſays he, to have Recourſe to any thing but to your Saviour on the Croſs, in his Wounds you are to ſeek for Courage and Conſolation, againſt the Fears and Terrors of Death: It is thoſe alone that muſt ſoften all it's Rigors, and Sweeten it's Bitterneſs: Receive therefore my Brother this Comfortable Object, in whoſe Arms I leave you.

Behold

*January and July.*

Behold then the End of all thoſe Vain Ideas of Greatneſs, Power, and Pleaſure which this World affords! My God! This is what the Libertine ſees himſelf reduc'd to at the laſt hour. But when one has Liv'd in an indifference for JESUS CHRIST, and an extream neglect for his Salvation, and led a Soft and Senſual Life, will he, at the hour of his Death, find much Comfort by holding in his Hands a Crucifix? But if this Perſon, who ſees himſelf left and without any other Company than a Crucifix, has no reſemblance to JESUS CHRIST Crucifi'd, if in the time of his Health he had no Senſe of, or was not at all mov'd, by the terrible Truths of our Religion, but on the contrary made a jeſt of the holieſt Practices of Piety; what Sentiments, what Thoughts, think you can he now poſſibly have?

It were well, at leaſt, if he did but know how to make an advantage of the little Remainder of his time; but alas! Can the Fright and the Trouble he is in, leave him all the Reaſon and all the Liberty that is neceſſary to enable him to profit, or make the right uſe of that time?

In the mean while the Sick Man Dyes; and it is indeed to much purpoſe, that we hope to give him ſome Conſolation by the Prayers of the Church; Theſe Prayers are in Truth very Comfortable for ſuch, as have Liv'd and Dy'd like Good Men, but can they give much Conſolation, to a Perſon who hears not a Word, but what

what Reproaches him with the Diſorders of his former Life?

*Quit this World O Chriſtian, Cry's out the Prieſt;* my God! What a diſpleaſing farewell is this! How ſad and hard to one that has Lov'd the World, to one that has perhaps Lov'd nothing but the World, to one that has done nothing for Heaven! *Proficiſcere*, there is then an end on't; he muſt quit all things, how much ſoever he Loves them, and how unwilling ſoever he be to Leave them; he wou'd not by his good Will quit any thing, and yet muſt dye to every thing.

Proficiſcere anima Chriſtiana de hoc mundo.

*May thy Soul O Chriſtian be this Day in Peace, and thy Dwelling place in* Sion: Oh! How Charitable a wiſh is this! But what can the Dying Man think, when he knows fullwell, there is no Reaſon to make this wiſh in Favour of him.

Hodie ſit in pace locus tuus & habitatio tua in ſancta Sion.

*Have Mercy Lord*, continues the Prieſt, *have Pity on him, and hearken to his Sighs and Groans, and let his Tears move you to Compaſſion:* But what alas; if his Grief proceeds from no other motive, than his ſeeing himſelf deſpoil'd of all that was moſt Dear to him, and that this is it which forces him to Sigh and Mourn; and if, in reality, to be able to Sin no more, be his only Trouble and Regret, and the true Source and Cauſe of all his Tears?

Miſerere Domine gemitui im, Miſerere lacrymarum ejus.

*Conſider Lord, that this is a Soul which you your ſelf have drawn out of Nothing; it was not Created by any ſtrange God,*

Agnoſce Domine Creaturam tuam,

non à Dijs alienis, ſed à te ſolo Deo vivo & vero.

*but is the Work of your own Hands; caſt it not off therefore O Lord, but own and cheriſh it as your own Workmanſhip.* But if this Soul has in it's Life time prefer'd the vileſt Creatures, before the true God, it's Creatour; if it has lead a Life not conformable to the Maxims of JESUS CHRIST, what appearance is there of it's reſembling him at this laſt Hour? And if it has no reſemblance of CHRIST what is he to expect, and what are like to be the conſequences of his Death?

*January* and *July.*

Oh my God! What are the Thoughts of a Man in his Agony like to be? Of a Man who ſees himſelf expos'd as it were a prey to Pain, Grief and Deſpair, without Comfort and Eaſe? For if he has Senſe enuff left, to know and diſtinguiſh things about him; all that he can ſee, and all that he can hear, do but increaſe his Fear and his Anguiſh; but if he has loſt the uſe of his Senſes, altho' he be thereby free'd from the Diſtraction of outward Objects, yet with what Application and with what a Heart-breaking do's he think of the Evil which he has done, or of the Good, which he might, and has not done; or, if he has, has done it amiſs?

Oh what Reflections do's he then make, but all to no purpoſe! How rightly and truly do's he then judge of things; but alas, all this reaſoning comes too late, to have any benefit by it; and what a number of things do's he then Repent of! But it is a ſad Repentance when one is ſenſible

ſenſible, that it can do him no good; what a grief will it then be to him, for not having done what he might, and what he ſhou'd have done? And what Deſpair muſt he then be in, for being unable to do what was once in his power to have done? He was not willing to make thoſe ſerious Reflections upon the great Truths our Faith teaches us, which in his Life time he might have made with ſucceſs: He makes them now, and has leiſure enuff for 'em; but alas! But how cruel is this Leiſure, when Vexation and Deſpair is all the Fruit he gathers from 'em? *January* and *July.*

Then a Man is ſenſible of all his Irregularities; then he acknowledges but too Late, that he has been hitherto in an Errour: My God! What muſt be the Thoughts of a Perſon Conſecrated to God, when at the Moment his Eternal Lot is to be decided, he reflects how very Imperfectly he has Liv'd, in a State which requir'd ſo Sublime a Perfection. Ah! To what purpoſe did he make all that noiſe and ſtir, when he Renounc'd the World to lead a Religious Life? Since it was but to Live in Religion according to the Maxims of the World. God gave me the Grace to chooſe an Eccleſiaſtic or Religious State of Life; but have I Profited by this Grace? I depriv'd my ſelf of all things, I embrac'd this Perfect State, that by Dying like a Saint I might Dye in Peace: But oh, unhappy that I am! Did I not know that a good Death was the

*January and July.*

Fruit of a Holy Life? Alas! How often have I ſayd this to others? And why have I not my ſelf made an advantage of what I ſayd to them? How often have I Prayd without Attention? How many Maſſes have I heard, how many Communions, and how many Confeſſions have I made without Profit, or Amendment? What Graces have I made uſeleſs, and what good Works have I loſt, for want of good Motives? Ah Lord! Was it neceſſary for ſo great a loſs, to have been at ſo much Expence? Was it neceſſary to quit his Parents with ſo much Violence, and to become inſenſible to all their Tears and all their Careſſes, and to have overcome with ſo much ſtruggling, the greateſt obſtacles, to aſſure himſelf of his Salvation? And that, for having too earneſtly ſought after ſome ſmall Conveniencies, and for a particular Inclination to ſome things, with which, whilſt in the World, he wou'd have been aſham'd to be in Love withall; he ſhou'd have lead a Luke-warm Life in Religion, and in the Agony of Death find himſelf overwhelm'd with Remorſe of Conſcience, and in ſtrange Trouble and Confuſion, and Dye in a formal Doubt of his Salvation. It's but a poor Comfort to have purchas'd ſo ſad a Death, at ſo dear a Rate.

But what elſe can a Life ſpent between hot and cold produce, when a Man conſiders ſeriouſly and in cold Blood, as he then do's, that the ſmaleſt of the many Graces which he has ſlighted, might have Converted

Converted a Pagan, and yet all of them together cou'd not make him a good Religious and perfect Chriſtian? What a prodigious number of Faults, which we did not perceive, or which Paſſion and Lukewarmneſs made us think Light, will then appear grievous Sins? What ground of Comfort can an Imperfect Religious then have? Will it be to think of his Rules, which he has kept ſo ill; or to invoke the Saints of his Order, which he has Diſhonour'd by his Conduct? Or to call on God himſelf, whom he has ſo ill Serv'd, notwithſtanding the many Benefits he had receiv'd from him? *January and July.*

And what in reality muſt the Sentiments be of a Perſon, that has Liv'd ſo Irregular a Life; then, when he comes to think; I am aſſur'd that I ſhall Dye in a few Hours? If I am not in Favour, I am loſt for all Eternity; and I have not only ſome cauſe, which the moſt juſt have, to Fear, but I have alſo a poſitive Reaſon to Doubt it.

In this Extremity, all that ever was heard of Judgment, Hell and Eternity, comes to his Mind, and ſtrik's him in a moſt terrible manner: Now that a Man, who a little before doubted and waver'd, is perſwaded of thoſe Truths, which he wou'd never Believe; behold what Terrour, what Fear and Trouble he is in, at the very Thought alone of Death and Eternity.

*January* and *July.*

We ſometimes meet with Men, who Raily and make a Jeſt of the Holieſt Practices of Piety, and account the great Punctuality of Devout and Fervent Perſons, in performing the ſmalleſt Duties of their State and Calling, Triffling and Weakneſs. They aſſure us they have Reaſon to Act and Judge in that manner: Let them make the ſame Judgment ſtill, and keep up to the laſt, even to their Deaths, their Characters of Scoffing and Jeſting, of great Wits, and Men of ſtrong and extraordinary Senſe; if it be true that they were before in the Right, let 'em then, when Dying, applaud themſelves for having ridicul'd and treated thoſe Exerciſes of Devotion, and that Punctuality and Exactneſs, as Scruples and Trifles; they fram'd to themſelves an Erroneous Conſcience, and have Liv'd under the ſhelter of it, in a falſe Security; let them if they can, ſtill Act accordingly, and govern themſelves by the ſame Syſteme; but, my God! It is their having Scoff'd at Religion, and turn'd it's Profeſſors into Ridicule, that puts them then, into Confuſion and Deſpair.

Whilſt we enjoy our Healths, Paſſion blinds us, Example draws us on, Worldly objects bewitch us, and our time is taken up by the troubleſome buſineſs of the World; it ſeems, as if we took pleaſure in ſtopping our Ears againſt the great verities of Faith, and that Faith it ſelf was half extinguiſh'd by the Diſorders of an Irregular Life. When Men come to Dye, they

they Believe, but it is with a Faith that Frightens and Confounds them, a Faith like that of Devils, which makes them Tremble, but Converts them not. *January and July.*

It is ſtrange that all ſhou'd agree, that a Man is in deſpair at the hour of his Death, for not having Mortifi'd himſelf, for having lead a Soft and Senſual Life, for having done ſo few Good Works, and in a Word, for having Liv'd as he has done; and yet notwithſtanding theſe Reflections, of the truth of which every Body is fully Convinc'd, that he ſhou'd take ſo little pains to Live better; or that any Perſon ſhou'd be found to make theſe ſame Reflections which we now make, and yet not mend his Life, or Live more like a Chriſtian ſeems very ſtrange.

When we are Dying all Obſtacles are remov'd, and we are left at liberty to judge of things, without Prejudice or Prepoſſeſſion: The little ſolidity of the goods of this World, and the emptineſs of the pleaſures Men enjoy on Earth, were ſeen before, but not throughly weigh'd and conſider'd: At the hour of Death, we do not only ſee, but are alſo ſenſible of this. Nay we cannot conceive, why we were not ſooner ſenſible of the fadingneſs and indigence, the diſſatisfaction and the Vanity of all Earthly Creatures: we then find in a moſt feeling manner, that we have been greatly Deceiv'd; but what a Mortal Grief and Affliction muſt it be, to be in a Condition

*January* and *July.*

unable to Remedy, or Recover the loſs, our fatal Errour has brought upon us?

A Man newly expir'd, is indeed a very ſad Spectacle; but very proper to diſabuſe and wean us from the Goods and Pleaſures of this Life; he has no ſooner given up the Ghoſt, then every one is ſtruck with a mournful Silence, and tho' he had been the moſt accomplith'd Perſon in the World, for all kind of good qualities, yet, now alas, he can inſpire no Thoughts, but thoſe of Melancholy and Horrour; a Winding-ſheet is thrown over the Body, the Curtains are drawn cloſe, and the Attendance all Retire: What is become of all that Beauty, all that Health, and all that Gracefulneſs and Good Humour, all his Great Projects and Mighty Fortune, with whch he was wont to Pleaſe and Entertaini himſelf and others?

Behold the End of all theſe things: But where is the Soul, and what will become of the Body, this Carcaſs which already begins to Stinck? Tho' it had been the Body of the moſt Lovely and Honorable Perſon in the World, yet is it no longer to be ſeen or indur'd; it muſt be put out of the way and Buried; Husbands, Wives, Children, Friends, Relations, Neighbours, Domeſticks, every one preſſes, and is earneſt to have the Corps remov'd out of the Houſe; thoſe who were moſt tenderly concern'd for him, are moſt in haſt to be rid of him; they will not even hear one ſpeak of him; but hire Men to carry him out,

and

and expoſe him a Prey to the Worms; they ſhut him up in a Coffin, and cover him over with Earth; and can one think without Horrour, what ſhall become of him in the Grave within two Days after? *January* and *July.*

And he is no ſooner Buried, but every one returns to his own home; and to his own buſineſs, and thinks of making other Friends and taking new Meaſures; this alas! Will be yours, and mine, and every Bodies caſe; and you ſhall be no ſooner Buried, than quite forgotten, and no more thought of, than if you had never been Born: Men no longer Fear, but Laugh at your Anger; they are now no more Solicitous to be in your Favour, and very often change and undo all that you have done; they make no account at all of you, and in reality you are no longer to be reckon'd any thing of this World.

It is very likely that on the Day you Dye, your Friends and Relations will ſhed ſome Tears, for loſing you, or rather for loſing in you ſome Pleaſure or Support, there is indeed much Crying in the World, but there is alſo more Grimace and Affectation than Real Sorrow in all that Crying; and they will ſoon dry up their Tears and Comfort themſelves; and any little advantage, which they find by your Death, or ſhare in your Inheritance, will eaſily make them Rejoyce; let us judge what other Men will do after our Deaths, by what we our ſelves have done after the Death of others: Our Friends and

*January* and *July.*

Relations are Dead; did we Grieve long for them, or were we not quickly Comforted? And If they were ſo unhappy as to forfeit their Salvation, did we hold our ſelves much oblig'd, or give them any thanks, for Damning themſelves, tho' it was to do us a Pleaſure?

And after this account is there any great reckoning to be made of the Goods and Pleaſures of this Life? To ſpeak Truth it is very ſurprizing that Men ſhou'd think ſo little of Death; but it is yet more ſtrange that they ſhou'd not, when they think of it, Repent and be Converted: How many People Live as if they were aſſured they ſhou'd never Dye, or that they ſhou'd Dye more than once? As if they were to loſe nothing by Dying Ill, or were to recover again what they had once loſt? Are not we our ſelves of this Number? And what ſhall be our Thoughts at the hour of Death, upon remembring the Reflections which we now make, in caſe we reap no Benefit by them?

## II. Point.

## II. Point.

### *Of the Thoughts which Perſons, who have ſpent their Life in Fervour and the Practice of Vertue, will have at their laſt Hour.*

CONSIDER how eaſie and ſweet a thing it is to Dye, when one has Liv'd well; Death is the pain and puniſhment of Sin; and therefore can properly ſpeaking, be painful to none but Sinners; muſt it not therefore be a great ſubject of Joy and Comfort to thoſe, who have Liv'd in the continual Exerciſes of Vertue and Piety, and may they not well Dye Content, when they Dye Saints? *January and July.*

The Death of the Juſt, ſays the Prophet, is Precious in the Sight of God; it is therefore Dear to him: Every thing that is Precious is eſteem'd, and where-ever it be, great care is taken of it: Tho' good Men ſhou'd Dye Suddenly, and Deſtitute of all Human Succour, yet wou'd not their Death be unforſeen: God takes particular care of it, it is very Precious in his Eyes and cannot therefore but be Happy.

*January and July.*

At this last Hour every thing Contributes to the Comfort of good Men; what Joy, what Comfort, must that Man have at his Death, who has Liv'd the Life of a Christian, in the continual Exercise of Vertue and Pennance? The prospect of what is to come, cannot but greatly sweeten and ease the pains and bitterness of his present Condition.

All that was troublesome and difficult in the Service of God, is over; Fasting, and all the Exercises of Mortification, Labour, Austerity and Pennance are at an end: The Good and the Evil passe away alike: But what Pleasure do's a Man receive, at the Hour of his Death, from the Sense of not having done the Ill he might have done? And what Joy from having done the Good he was oblig'd to do; especially when he thinks of the Sorrow and the Regret he must have had, if he had not done it?

How long soever a Mans Life has been, it do's not seem at the Hour of his Death, that there was more then one Moment between the Day of his Birth; and the last Day of his Life: And one cannot then but be very much pleas'd with himself, for having done what he was indispensably oblig'd to do, and which was in his Power not to have done: What wou'd it have advantag'd me now, says the Dying Man, to have made a great Fortune, to have got me powerful Friends, to have made one in all Diversions, and to have follow'd the Maxims

Maxims of the World? I now condemn, and will for ever condemn them: No Affections for any Earthly Objects cou'd ſtave off my Death for one Moment; behold I am for ever Baniſh'd from all Company; all the Pleaſures of the World cou'd not free me from the ſmalleſt of my Pains; and nothing now cou'd have remain'd of all thoſe Vanities, but the trouble and vexation, for having tyr'd my ſelf, to my utter Damnation, in the Perſuit of 'em: It is well for me, that I was wiſe enough, to Deſpiſe theſe Vanities; for, whether I wou'd or no, I muſt have quitted them now: Oh how Sweet and Comfortable is it, to be able thus to entertain our ſelves? To think that, in our Life time, we had withſtood, or renounc'd all the Follies and Vanities of this World. *January and July.*

I had indeed matter of Importance upon my Hands; Eternity was at Stake, my Salvation was my only great Affair, to have ſucceeded in all other things, and to have miſcarried in this, was to have done juſt Nothing; I was in danger not to have done it: But, alas! If I had not wrought out my Salvation, what wou'd have become of me? I tremble at the very Thought of it; but by the Aſſiſtance of God's Grace, I have compaſs'd it: My God, my God, what a Comfortable Thought is this!

Let us repreſent to our ſelves a Man come from far, about a buſineſs of the greateſt Conſequence his Fortune, his Honour, and his Life were at ſtake: He comes juſt in the nick

*January* and *July.*

nick of time, to get an Audience of his Prince, to inform the Judges of his Pretentions, and to juſtifie his Conduct; had he ſtay'd but one Day, nay but two Hours longer, he had come too late; Judgment had paſt againſt him; and he had been Condemn'd to Death: My God! What joy muſt it be to him, not to have triſl'd away his time, and amus'd himſelf on the way with empty and inſignificant Diverſions? But his joy muſt be yet much greater, if his diligence procures him, over and above that, a glorious eſtabliſhment, and makes him become the Princes Favorit, loaden with Riches and Honour: Will he, think you, Repent him, or be ſorry, for having depriv'd himſelf of a hundred little Pleaſures and Conveniencies, which he might have met with on the Road? Eſpecially if he hears, that many others, who had the ſame Journey to make, and upon the like occaſions, had loſt their Cauſe, by having loyter'd away their time in Fooliſh Amuſements, and by having Studied too much, their petty Conveniences and Satisfactions on the way; and for a finiſhing ſtroke of their Diſgrace, were not only ſtripp'd of all their Fortune, but alſo forc'd to end their Miſerable Lives on a Gallows: Oh what a true and real Pleaſure do's a Man feel, in thinking of the dangers he has eſcap'd, and in recounting the adventures he has paſt? And is it not a moſt Sweet and Comfortable thing to think, at the Hour of Death, of the ſmall pains

pains we have ſuffer'd for God in the time of our Life?

*January* and *July.*

Did ever any Dying Man repine for not having been Senſual enough, nor Liv'd with all the Softneſs and Delicaſie that he might have done? No, no; he grieves, and is heartily ſorry for the time he has loſt, in the vain divertiſments of the World, and extreamly regrets, his having lov'd Pleaſures too much, and Mortifications too little; alas, alas! Perhaps our whole Life has been made up of nothing elſe, but what we are troubl'd for, at our Deaths.

Was ever any Religious Perſon diſpleas'd with himſelf at this laſt Hour, for haveing willingly, and with ſo much Merit, quitted his Fortune and his Relations, together with the World, which muſt then all have been torn away from him, with great Violence, and without any manner of Advantage? He will then indeed, be Afflicted, if he has been but Imperfectly Religious; but he will be far from being diſſatisfied for having been Religious.

The very Thought of Death ſtartles the moſt intrepid, and frightens the Wicked; but fill's the Saints with joy. A good Man, ſays Saint *John Clymachus*, fears not Death, and a Saint deſires it; the Receiving of the Viaticum at the Hour of Death, is the greateſt Comfort to him, who all his Life long, has had a great and tender Love for JESUS CHRIST; and who can now, in this his laſt Viſit, ſay to him, *Come Lord, my Heart is Ready.*

The

*January* and *July.*

Prpficiſcere anima Chriſtiana de hoc mundo.

The Crucifix, at the hour of Death, is a very agreeable Sight, to a Perſon, who has, all his Life, liv'd under his Croſs, and born it Patiently. O what a Comfort is it, to a truly Chriſtian Soul, to ſee itſelf invited, *To leave this World, which it had been ſo little ty'd to, and to go to the Heavenly Jeruſalem, which it had ſo long Sigh'd after?* It is as if one ſhou'd ſay to an Exil'd Prince, Return to your Country, you are Recall'd from your Baniſhment; or to a Brave Souldier, who having Signaliz'd himſelf by a great number of Famous Actions, is call'd by his King, to Receive a Reward worthy of his Labours.

The ſight indeed of their Sins may be a juſt cauſe of Fear; but the ſight of a Crucifix, the Prayers of the Church, the Aſſiſtance of the Saints; but above all that of the Queen of Saints, and even of JESUS CHRIST himſelf, Inſpires the Juſt, at this laſt Moment, with ſuch a certain Confidence in the Mercy of God, that neither Temptations, nor Trouble, is able to Terrifie them.

The ſight of their good Works, is not to them a Subject of Vanity, but of Confidence, and Aſſurance in God, that he who had the goodneſs to do them ſo many Favours, during their Lives, will not abandon them in the hour of their Deaths. Nor will the Tenderneſs and Affection, which they had for the Holy Virgin, and the Remembrance of the ſingular Favours they had Receiv'd from her, be a leſs Subject

ject of Joy and Conſolation, to ſuch Fervent Souls, as having been Inflam'd with the Love of CHRIST, long paſſionately to be United to him; and wait, with an unexpreſſable Joy, for that Happy Moment. Ah! How ſweet and pleaſant a thing it is, to Dye with the Name of JESUS in one's Mouth, when a Man has, to his Death, Lov'd him with Tenderneſs and Affection! *January* and *July.*

There is a great deal of difference between the Death of the Juſt and the Death of the Wicked; a difference that is perceiv'd, not only in, but alſo after their Deaths: A dead Body is, of it ſelf, a frightful ſight; People are afraid to go into the Chamber where it lyes, they dare not go near the Coffin, and have a horrour, even for every thing that was made uſe of about it; but if they are perſwaded, that the Man was a Saint, what Veneration have they not for the Dead Body? The Chamber he Dy'd in frightens them not; and he accounts himſelf Happy, that can get any thing, that was imploy'd in his Service: Every one ſtrives to touch the Body, and to Kiſs it, and tho' it be a Dead Body, 'tis no matter; for Holineſs do's not only make Death ſweet and agreeable to thoſe who Dye; but alſo takes away, what's ſhocking and frightful to others; and renders the Dead Body, not only Precious, but alſo Venerable to all Beholders. The Death of the Saints do's Charm us all; but yet it is very ſtrange and wonderful, that the deſire

deſire we have to Dye like 'em, ſhou'd not
*January* make us Live better than we do.
and
*July.* Every one cry's out with the Prophet, *Oh, that I might Dye the Death of the Juſt! and that my latter End might be like theirs:* But what will this Vain and Fruitleſs Wiſh ſignifie, if we do not lead the ſame kind of Life they did? Are we ſtill to learn that the ſweetneſs, which Saints taſt in Death, is the ordinary Fruit of their Holy Lives? To have that Pleaſure, we muſt Live, as they have done, in a continual Mortification of our Senſes, and Paſſions, perfectly deſpiſing, and wholly wean'd from, the Pleaſures of the World; in a conſtant Exerciſe of Chriſtian Vertues, and Practice of all ſuch good Works, as are proper for our State and Condition.

Whence comes it to paſs, that we do ſo little prepare our ſelves for Death; ſince there is nothing ſo Important and Neceſſary for us; and that our all, depends ſo much upon Dying well, that it is impoſſible to repair the loſs we make by Dying ill? Oh! It is a Sad Melancholy thing, to have no other Comfort at the hour of Death, but what is to be had from uſeleſs and unprofitable Sighs and Lamentations, for having miſpent our Time, and Trifl'd away our Lives in Sin and Vanity. When we are Dead, tho' we had been faſten'd to the World by a hundred Chains, and had been the moſt Zealous Idolaters of all it's deceitful Charms and glittering Vanities, yet is the World at an End to us.

And

And what have we been able to carry out of it? What Recompence for all our Services? Or rather what Vexation, what Heart-breaking, for having Admir'd, Valu'd and Ador'd it? Oh, how wiſe are they, who know how to leave the World, before the World leaves them, and to Deſpiſe it, before they are Deſpis'd by it! *January* and *July.*

It is indeed a ſad Spectacle, to ſee a Man carried, with his Feet for-moſt, out of a Stately Houſe, which he had newly Built or Purchas'd; never more to return; but leaving another Man Maſter of it, of his Moveables, his Wealth, his Eſtate, and of every thing he had in the World. Where are, now, all our Friends and Relations? Where are the Great on's of the World, who formerly made ſo great a Noiſe; and appear'd with ſo much Splendour? All theſe People are gon, and are now become nothing in the World; where Men are conſider'd no farther than they are uſeful; all their Pomp and Glory is paſt; and they are no longer any thing, even in the Grave, where their very Fleſh is Moulder'd and Rotted away, their Bones Burnt up and Dry'd, and their whole Body reduc'd to Duſt and Aſhes: Nay, they are no longer any thing, even in the Memory of Men. Do we much buſie our ſelves in Remembring thoſe who are gon before us? Their Faults, indeed, are not Forgot, and their Conduct is uſually Blam'd. Behold, this is all the Recompence, all the Reward, that we are ordinarily to Expect, even

*January* and *July.*

even from thoſe we have oblig'd moſt. Oh, how Content wou'd Men Dye, if they had done, but the hundred part, for God, of what they have unprofitably, done for the World!

But my God, what will be the effect of all theſe Reflections? And what Thoughts, what Trouble and Anxiety ſhall I have, at the hour of Death, if I Reap no Profit by them now? Ah! What! Shall I be fully perſwaded, as I am, that there is nothing Solid and Permanent, but you my God, and yet ever hereafter be in Love with any thing elſe but you? Since there is nothing but you alone, that can make me Happy, both in this Life, and in the hour of my Death.

The Saints were Wiſe indeed, for haveing in their Life time, Deſpis'd their Bodies, Treated them Severely, and never Pamper'd 'em; but ſhall I be Wiſe, if I neglect to follow the Example of theſe Saints? Oh, how glad were they for having lead a Mortifi'd and a Holy Life; a Life, ſo contrary to that of Worldly Men! But, my God, what good will it do me, to have had all theſe fine Thoughts, and to have made all theſe Reflections, if I do not, from this Moment, Repent and Change my Life? I thank thee Lord, for having ſtill given me time to Prepare my ſelf to Dye well; I know that I muſt begin by Living well; and this it is, that for the future I reſolve to do, without deferring it one Moment longer.

Of

OF

# Preparation for Death.

## Sec. I.

### *How neceſſary it is to prepare on's ſelf to Dye.*

ALL the World agrees, that Death's a thing of the greateſt Conſequence; that nothing is more Difficult, than a good Death, and nothing more irreparable than a Bad one; and yet notwithſtanding it may be ſayd, that perhaps there is nothing Men prepare themſelves ſo little for, as Death.

If one was to Dye twice, to run the riske of Dying once ill, wou'd be leſs Imprudent; a Man might then repair his Fault, and at the ſame time, Repent for having lead an ill Life, and made an ill End: But alas! We can Dye but once, and upon this Death, a Happy, or an unhappy Eternity do's abſolutely depend.

It do's in truth, import us much to Live well, ſays a great Servant of God; it is never the leſs true, that it do's alſo import us much more to Dye well; ſince the

the moſt Holy Life can ſtand us in no ſtead, if it be not attended with a Good Death. The more we have Labour'd for Heaven, the more Holy our Life has been, the more it is our Intereſt to end it Holily; that we may not loſe, but Reap the Fruit of our Labours. It is true, that a good Death, is the ordinary Fruit of a good Life; but it is alſo as true, that a bad Death may deſtroy all the Merits of the moſt holy Life, and that all the Merits of our Life cannot ſecure us a good Death.

How comes it then, that we do no more think of preparing our ſelves for Death, than if we were aſſur'd, that we ſhou'd not Dye at all; or elſe ſhou'd Dye well; or that we ſhou'd Dye more then once, or loſe nothing by Dying ill; or that it was very eaſie to Dye well.

Do we not know, that there is great danger to do that ill, which we never did before; eſpecially, when we are not Inſtructed in the means to do it well? Are we to learn, that a good Death is a moſt Difficult thing, and that to put off the care, of Preparing our ſelves for Death, to the laſt fit of Sickneſs, is to wait a very uncertain time, for an Affair of the greateſt Importance? A time, too ſhort for an Affair of ſo long Diſcuſſion, and too Improper, for ſo Nice, ſo Tender, and ſo Difficult a Matter: It is, in reality, to ſtay till Death, to prepare ones ſelf to Dye. We muſt, therefore (go's on this great Servant of God) prepare our ſelves betimes, and this very

very Moment begin, leſt if we defer it longer, we ſhou'd either want time, or that the time we ſhall have, ſhou'd be, (as it certainly will) of all, the leaſt proper to procure us a good Death.

If to Dye well, there was nothing more to be done, but to Receive the laſt Sacraments, to Kiſs the Crucifix, and Shed a few Tears, our Imprudence wou'd, in ſome manner, be the more Tolerable; but how many, with all the Helps imaginable, have made a very ill End, for want of Preparing themſelves for a good one?

To Dye well, is to Dye in the State of Grace, to Dye a true Penitent; and for this, it is neceſſary to hate Sin, and to hate it above all things in the World: Can this be an eaſie matter; to a Man who has Lov'd it all his Life; and who expects, that Death ſhou'd draw him as it were by Force, from the occaſions of Sinning? Is it eaſie then to make an effectual Purpoſe to Sin no more? Is it an eaſie thing, for a Man to make, in this laſt hour, great Acts of Contrition, of Faith, Hope, and Charity; who had never Practis'd any of them before? For a Man quite overcome with the Pains of his Diſeaſe, frightend at the approach of Death, his Soul in Confuſion and full of Trouble; is it I ſay, eaſie for him to regulate and ſettle, at the ſame time, the affairs of his Family, and his Conſcience? To repair by a General Confeſſion (which requires great Leiſure and Attention) all the Faults and Omiſſions of

of former Confeſſions; and in one Word, to do, in leſs than two hours (when they are in a condition of hardly knowing what they do) the moſt intricate buſineſs of all others? A buſineſs, which of all others requir's the moſt Time, a perfect Tranquility, and a great application of Mind?

If it were ſo eaſie for one to make a good End, who had made ſo little Preparation for Death, the Saints wou'd have been very much in the wrong, to have taken ſo much pains, and imploy'd their whole Lives in that Preparation; and yet notwithſtanding all this, they cou'd not free themſelves at their Deaths, from a juſt and reaſonable Fear; we ſhou'd alſo be in the wrong, to acknowledge, as we do, that the Saints were truly Wiſe in doing what they did. We all agree, that a Man cannot make too great a Preparation for Death, how comes it to paſs, that we make ſo little an one for it?

It may be ſayd with a great deal of Truth, that there is nothing, the Son of God, who foreſaw our Negligence in this Point, has ſo much Exhorted us to, as to this Preparation: *Watch*, ſays he, *becauſe you know not at what Hour the Lord will Come;* *Watch*, ſays he, in another place, *becauſe you are Ignorant of the Day and Hour of your Deaths:* Therefore keep your ſelves continually upon your garde, and be always ready. And to make us ſee more clearly, that the Preparation for Death, is the ſure means to make it Happy: *Happy*, ſays he,

*Matt. c. 7. v. 14.*

*Marc. c. 7. v. 13.*

he, *are thoſe Servants, whom the Lord ſhall find Watching and Ready to open the Door when he Knocks.* This Preparation is neceſſary for all thoſe, who aſpire to a Good Death: And it ſeems as if God, who is the Soveraign Arbiter and Judge of it, had ordain'd that the Grace of Dying well, ſhou'd be the Conſequence of the care, a Man has to diſpoſe himſelf for it.

This is the very thing which is Declar'd to us in the Parable of the Virgins; the Wiſe ones, who had provided Oyl for their Lamps, and had of a long time before-hand prepar'd themſelves to receive the Bride-groom, went in with him, and were Admitted to the Marriage Feaſt; but the Fooliſh Virgins, who had not the ſame foreſight, were, for a Puniſhment of their Sloathful Careleſneſs, Excluded from that Happineſs.

All Men eaſily agree, that there is great need of Preparation to Dye well; hence it is, that ſuddain Death is ſo much fear'd: But after all, what good has this fear done? And to what Preparation has it yet ingag'd us? We wait for the laſt Sickneſs to prepare our ſelves for Death; and it is Juſt, as is commonly ſayd, to wait for Death, to prepare our ſelves to Dye well.

Really the Wiſe Men of the World are not ſo negligent in the management of their Temporal Affairs: Nor do we our ſelves, act in theſe things after this manner: Do we ever take in Hand any Buſineſs, tho' never ſo little, relating to our Intereſt, our

Honour, or our Pleaſure, without taking long before hand our Meaſures to make it ſucceed? If we are to ſpeak in Publick, or oblig'd to give ſome proofs of our Capacity, with what care, and how long before hand, do we prepare our ſelves to make a fine Oration, or an elegant Speech? If there be a Prize to be got by ſome Bodily Exerciſe, how much time is there ſpent to fit and make a Man expert in it? What wou'd not a ſtout Champion do, ſays Saint *Paul*, to prepare himſelf for the Combat? He wou'd Study, for a long time, all the Feats of Activity he deſign'd to make uſe of; he wou'd indeavour to foreſee all the Artifices that might be imploy'd to ſurpriſe him; and leſt his Strength ſhou'd be impair'd by Pleaſures, with what Temperance and Frugality wou'd he not Live for ſeveral Years? And yet notwithſtanding all this Labour and Pains, there was nothing at Stake, but a little Vain Honour; and an Inconſiderable Reward. We know that our Salvation depends upon the manner of our Death; and yet we take no pains to learn to Dye well: It is a terrible Combat we are to be ingag'd in at the hour of our Death; and yet we are willing to enter into this Combat, without even handling any Arms, without conſidering and foreſeeing how we may be ſure not to be overcome; in a Word, we Hope to make a Good End; tho' we want Learning to Dye well; nay are even without knowing, what it is we ought to Learn.

How

How long will Men count upon Health, upon Age, and upon the eaſineſs to find Aſſiſtance in the hour of Death? Is there any thing in the World, we are more perſwaded of, than the uncertainty of this laſt Hour? Who is he that wou'd hazard a Part of his Eſtate, upon the hopes of a long Life? One may Dye every Moment, and there paſſes not a Day, which may not be our Laſt; Men Dye every hour of the Day; and yet we are ſo inconſiderate and fooliſh, as to put off, from Day to Day, our Preparation for Death: We wait for another time; but, ah my God! What time do we wait for?

The time of Sickneſs, is the time to be Ready, and not the time to Prepare; *Be yee Prepar'd*, ſays our Saviour, he do's not ſay, *Prepare your ſelves*, but, *Be yee Ready*; whence it is plain, that to be Ready, a Man muſt be Prepar'd before Hand. Eſtote Parati.

What ſhou'd Men ſay of a Captain of a Ship, who ſhou'd not think of ſeeing whether his Cables and Anchors were in a good Condition, till he was overtaken by a Storm, and in danger of Ship-wrack? Or of a Governour of a Town, who ſhou'd not think of Reparing the Breaches, and Providing himſelf with all ſorts of Ammunition and Neceſſaries, till he ſaw the Place Inveſted by his Enemies, and the Trenches Open'd.

*Death*, ſays the Wiſe Man, *is a Dangerous Voyage; wherein Men paſs, from Time to Eternity, amidſt Rocks and Tempeſts:* Prov. c. 7. v. 11.

*peſts: It is a ſtrong Siege, where the Soul finds it ſelf in a Moment beſet and ſurrounded with Enemies;* can any one believe this is a proper time, to prepare one's ſelf to Fight?

Luc. c. 7. v. 19.

We are afraid, that the Thoughts of Death ſhou'd interrupt our Pleaſures, diſturb our Joy, and make us Melancholly: this is a great miſtake; for the Thoughts of Death trouble none, but ſuch as will not prepare them ſelves for it, nor think on't before Hand; and theſe are miſtaken too: It is impoſſible, ever to attain any ſolid Happineſs even here below, but by thoſe very ways, which lead us to a Happy Death. To learn the Art of Dying well, ſays a great Servant of God, is not only to learn the Art of Living well, but alſo of Living happily: And it is very certain, that the Thoughts of Death wou'd not make us Sad, but becauſe we have juſt Reaſon to fear our Dying ill, for the Thought of Death is a Subject of great Joy and Comfort to a Man that knows the Art of Dying well; and indeed when one is ready to Dye at any Hour, he cannot be troubl'd at the Thoughts of Death.

Now ſince the main Deſign of this Retiring for a Day, is to diſpoſe a Man to make a good End, by making uſe of it, as a moſt proper means to make him Live well; it is indiſpenſibly neceſſary, to ſpeak of the Obligations we are all under, to prepare our ſelves for Death, and of the manner of doing it as it ought to be done.

Of

Of all the Practices of Piety it may be ſayd, there is not one more univerſally neceſſary, than this: Every one cannot Faſt; Solitude, and Auſterities, are not equally Proper for all ſorts of People; but there can be no one of what Age, State, or Condition ſoever, who can in Reaſon diſpence with preparing himſelf for Death; have we all of us hitherto ſufficiently prepar'd our ſelves for it? Or do we now prepare our ſelves for it? If we do not, being perſwaded, as we are, of it's neceſſity, how will it trouble us at our laſt Sickneſs, not to have done it?

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## Sec. II.

### *The manner of preparing on's ſelf to Dye well.*

THE moſt general, and alſo the moſt neceſſary, manner of preparing on's ſelf for Death, is to Live well; and a Man muſt begin to prepare himſelf to Dye well, from the time he is able to begin to Live well; and indeed, to ſpeak properly, the Life of a Chriſtian ought to be a continual Preparation for Death.

Men are afraid of ſuddain Death; but what do's this Fear produce, if a Man put's himſelf under a kind of neceſſity of making an unforeſeen End? And what

ſort of Death muſt theirs be, who put off their Preparation for it, to the very laſt Moment, wherein they muſt ceaſe to Live?

And in reality what appearance is there, that a Man, who has Liv'd ill, ſhou'd make a Happy End? That he ſhou'd repaire in two Days time the diſorders of a long Life; ſince the greateſt Saints, who had lead Perfect Lives, have yet nevertheleſs been in danger of Dying an ill Death? We Hope to have time enuff, that is to ſay, we wait for a time, when perhaps we ſhall have none at all; or a time, which is good for nothing; a time, that in reality, ſhall be no time for us: We reckon upon and make ſure of Grace, but beſides that, we hazard our All, in counting upon Grace, which God, without any Injuſtice, might have refus'd to the greateſt Saints; the Son of God himſelf has Proteſted, that thoſe, who put off their Converſion to the latter End of their Lives, *Shall Dye in their Sins.* When Death, which you think ſo far off (ſays the Holy Ghoſt by the Mouth of the Wiſe Man) when Tribulations and Calamities, which you are not afraid of, ſhall ſuddainly come upon you, *Then will I Laugh at you Sinner, and make a Jeſt of your Deſtruction:* You will then cry out to no purpoſe, and call in vain for Mercy, *For I will have no regard to your Lamentations, nor hearken to your Prayers;* indeed a Holy Life is rarely follow'd by an unhappy Death, but it is yet much more

Et in peccato veſtro moriemini.

In interitu veſtro ridebo & ſubſannabo vos:

Clamabitis ad me & non exaudiam vos.

more rare, to ſee a Wicked Life attended with a Happy one.

A more particular and proper manner of preparing on's ſelf for Death, is, to do on this day of Retreat, all the Exerciſes of the Day, as if we thought it were to be the laſt of our Life; not forgeting any thing that may put us into the ſame diſpoſition, we wou'd deſire to be found in at the hour of our Death.

To this purpoſe, we muſt ſeriouſly conſider at the end of every Meditation, what ought to be our Thoughts of the Truths we have Meditated upon, if we were juſt going to give an account to Almighty God of our whole Life; and we muſt above all things conſider, what it is that wou'd give us the greateſt trouble, if we were juſt upon the point of Dying.

There are three things, which do commonly give Men trouble at the hour of Death: 1. The having neglected the Duties of their calling: 2. The having made no Benefit of the frequent uſe of the Sacraments: 3. The having made no uſe of the Means, the Inſpirations, and Graces given 'em, to attain Perfection. We ought upon this Day, and eſpecially in the Meditation of Death, to conſider with Attention, whether we have nothing to Reproach our ſelves with, in theſe following Points. After what manner, and with what exactneſs have we hitherto, or do we now diſcharge the duties and obligations of our different Callings? If we are in-

gag'd in the World, do we Live in it like Christians? That is to say, according to the Maxims of JESUS CHRIST? If we have the happiness to be Religious, have we exactly kept our Vows and our Rules? If we have the honour to be Priests, do we by the Holyness of our Lives, maintain the Dignity of our Characters? Have we hetherto been, what we were bound to be? Are we content to be such as we are? And shall we be pleas'd, at the hour of our Death, with not being more Perfect than we are?

Have we nothing to Reproach our selves with, for having made so many Confessions, and most of 'em without any Amendment? And for having benefited so little, by our frequent Communions? JESUS CHRIST has given us his Body and his Blood, for the Nourishment of our Souls, have we been any thing the better, for it? If we were now to appear before this Judge, and he shou'd require of us an account of his Blood, what Answer shou'd we be able to make?

The Sacrifice of the Mass, is the most Sacred Act of our Religion, do we behave our selves in it as we ought? If a Priest were now to Dye, wou'd he find much Comfort by calling to mind the Dispositions he has been in, at the Celebrating of that Holy Mistery? Wou'd he have cause to rejoyce in the Sight of God, for having Offer'd up, so often, that Adorable Sacrifice?

Grace

Grace is the price of the Blood of JESUS CHRIST, have we not abus'd this Precious Grace? How many Holy Inſpirations, and Good Deſires have we had to no effect? We muſt give an exact Account of all theſe Gifts and Liberalities of our Saviour; if we were to Dye at this Moment, ſhou'd we be ready to give this Account? We have receiv'd Talents from him; it is not enuff, not to have loſt 'em, we ought to have profited by them, and made the moſt of 'em; if we ſhou'd be call'd upon, for an Account of what we have Receiv'd, are we able to Reſtore them double? Theſe are the things we ought to Examin our ſelves upon, at the end of every Exerciſe; but, chiefly of the Meditation of Death. We are to make our Confeſſion as if it were to be our laſt, and with a Purpoſe to repair thoſe, which, we have cauſe to believe, were not well made before: It is likewiſe fit, to make ſome Reflections upon the preſent State of our Affairs; and to ſettle them ſo, as that they may give us no trouble at the hour of Death.

And, in the laſt Place, we ought to endeavour at the end of this Day's Retreat, to put our ſelves into the State we wou'd deſire to be found in, at the laſt Moment of our Lives: And then end it, by Offering up, as a Sacrifice to JESUS CHRIST, all we Poſſeſs, our Wealth our Health, and our Lives; beſeeching him to diſpoſe of 'em entirely to his greater Honour and Glory; and from

that time resolving to accept of our Death freely and heartily, when, and how-ever it shall please him to send it us. We must at the same time apply our selves particularly to the most Blessed Virgin; desiring her to assist us at the last hour of our Lives: And by some particular Prayer have Recourse to Saint *Joseph*, and to our good Angel; from whom we may Receive a powerful assistance at that last Moment. And then after all conclude, with begging of Almighty God final Grace by some peculiar form of Prayer; according to every on's Devotion.

Another way of preparing on's self for Death, is to choose one Day in a Year, and Consecrate it wholly to this Preparation; doing that Day what of necessity must be done at the hour of Death, what infallibly one wou'd be glad at the last hour to have done, and what will be impossible to be done then.

On the Eve of the Day set a part for this Pious Exercise, we must endeavour to regulate our Affairs so, as not to be forc'd to interrupt it; seeing it requires a great Retirement, and a perfect Tranquillity of Mind: we shou'd begin, that Evening, if possible, by visiting the Blessed Sacrament; begging of CHRIST JESUS, by the Merits of his Death, the Grace to dispose our selves to Dye Well; and afterwards in a more particular manner call upon the Blessed Virgin (whose Protection is of so great use to us at this last hour)

Saint

Saint *Michaël*, our Angel Guardian, Saint *Joſeph*, and the Saint whoſe Name we bear; we may alſo recite the Veſpers, of the Office for the Dead: And in the next place make a Meditation of half an hour of the right uſe of Time, the Means, and Graces we have had to work our Salvation, which we have taken ſo little pains for.

The Subject of this Meditation may be taken from the Parable in the 16. *Chap.* of Saint *Luke*: Where we Read that a certain Rich Man, having call'd for his Steward whom he was diſſatisfied with, ſaid to him, *Give me an account of your Steward-ſhip, from the time you have been truſted with my Affairs*: Or elſe they may take the Meditation appointed for the Eve of the Retreat, upon the Parable of the Fig-Tree. Redde rationem villicationis tuæ.

The reſt of the Day muſt be ſpent in Solitude, far from the Noiſe and Hurry of the World, wholly taken up in ordering the Affairs of our Salvation, by a good Confeſſion of our Sins: Either a General one, if neceſſary; or elſe one of the laſt Year only, according to the Advice of our Directour; and we muſt omit nothing to put our Conſcience in ſo good a State, that we may have nothing to Reproach our ſelves with, nor any Scruple of what's paſt; looking upon this Day as the Laſt of our Life, and making a Reſolution to ſpend it, as if it really were ſo.

We muſt begin the following Day, with giving God thanks for affording us

ſtill both the time, and the Thoughts of Preparing our ſelves for Death; and, Proſtrat before a Crucifix, we muſt make an Offering to God of our whole Wealth, Health, and Life; freely and heartily accepting what ever kind of Death it ſhall pleaſe him to ſend us; and that in ſatisfaction for our Sins, and in Union with the Death of JESUS CHRIST. After this we are to make, an hours Meditation of Death, and all it's circumſtances; endeavouring to perſwade our ſelves, that we are not far from it; and entering into the very ſame Thoughts, which we ſhall be ſure to have at that time.

We muſt attentively conſider, with what rigour and ſeverity Death deprives us of all things; to what a Condition it reduces our Bodies in the Grave, and how we ſhall be forgotten after our Death. Relations, Friends, Servants and all forget us, and we are no more thought of, than if we had never been: We muſt alſo repreſent to our ſelves, the Emptineſs and Vanity of all things, that make us in Love with the World; how Senſleſs a thing it is, to put a value upon Creatures, Riches, Honours and Pleaſures, which all Vaniſh and are brought to Nothing by Death: Laſtly, we muſt Reflect, how important a thing it is to Dye well; how great a danger one is in of Dying ill, if he do's not prepare himſelf betimes for Death; but put off that Preparation to the laſt fit of Sickneſs.

The

The effect of this Meditation ſhou'd be a Sincere Reſolution to do preſently and without delay, what one wou'd wiſh to have done at the hour of Death, and what we then ſhall be unable to do. The obſcurity of the Place, and the ſight of ſome moving things, may contribute much to our Recollection: Some place before them the Picture of Death; in no other Light but that of a Candel; others hold all the while a Crucifix in their Hands, Imagining themſelves in their Agony, and that they have no more Comfort to Hope for, but from CHRIST alone; ſome there have been, who, to be the more ſenſibly touch'd, have hung their Chambers with Black, and kept their Winding-ſheet all the while upon their Table: And theſe kind of Preparatives have ſomething extraordinary mournful, which ſtrikes the Eyes, and makes an Impreſſion on the Mind.

We ought to make our Confeſſion juſt as if we were going to Dye; ſo as to forget nothing, nor diſguiſe any thing, that may afterwards give us the leaſt trouble: The Confeſſour muſt look into our Souls, and ſee all that we our ſelves, ſee all that God ſees there, and all that he will one Day let the whole World ſee, if we do not prevent this Dreadful Manifeſtation, by a clear and full Confeſſion: We muſt alſo above all things have a true Contrition for our Sins; a Point moſt Men commonly fail in.

This

This is not to be a piece of cold formall Ceremony, or pure Grimace and Affectation; a Man muſt ſay to himſelf, Eternity is now at Stake; I am to waſh away all that has been done amiſs in my former Life, to this very hour; I muſt do things in ſuch a manner, as that there may be no need to do them over again.

The Articles we are to Examin our ſelves upon with the greateſt care, are, the Reſtitution of other Mens Goods, the Reparation of their Honour, wounded by Slanders and Calumny, the ill Example given, the luke-warmneſs wherein a Soul has liv'd, our Enmities, the want of Sorrow, hearty Purpoſe and Sincerity in former Confeſſions, the Sins of our Youth, with other Sins, which intereſt inveagl'd us into; the ill Cuſtoms we have Practis'd; the Chains we were unwilling to break; the next occaſions of Sin, we were loath to fly from; the predominant Paſſion, the ſource of all our Diſorders, and which a Man ſeldome or never ſhakes off; the Exceſſive Love of Pleaſure; the willful Ignorance of ſome Duties of our Calling; certain Railleries, either Sharp or Scandalous; the ill uſe we made of the Sacraments, of our Time, and the Graces given us: If one be a Religious Man, he is to Examin himſelf upon his Neglect of his Vows; the little Regard he has had of his Rules; and generally upon the little care he has had, to acquit himſelf, as he ought to have done, in the par-

ticular

ticular Duties and Obligations of his State of Life.

Theſe are the things, which commonly give us the greateſt Diſturbance at our Death, and render our Salvation moſt uncertain. The great ſign of a Mans ſincere Reſolution and Sorrow, is, when Reſtitution of other Mens Goods, Reparation of Honour, flying the next Occaſions of Sin, and Reconciliations with our Enemies, go before our Confeſſion.

We muſt look upon our Communion, as if it were to be our Viaticum; imagining to our ſelves, that in Communicating, the Prieſt ſays: *Receive, Brother, the Body and Precious Blood of* JESUS CHRIST, *as your Viaticum for the Paſſage you are to make from Time to Eternity.* The Thoughts we are to entertain our ſelves with after this, ſhou'd be ſuch as are proper for the State we are to fancy our ſelves in, and which we ſhall not be able to have when we really come to it.

Accipe Viaticum Frater, Corpus Dominis Jeſu Chriſti, &c.

The buſineſs of a Mans Conſcience being firſt ſettled, the Temporal affairs are next to be conſider'd; and all we have to be Diſpos'd of, juſt as if we were going to Dye: *Make your Will*, ſays Saint *Auguſtin*, *whilſt you are in Health, and in your Senſes, whilſt you are Maſter*, as one may ſay, *both of Time and your Self*: *In your laſt Fit of Sickneſs*, ſays this Father, *you will be expos'd to Flatteries, to Importunities, and to the intrigues and Surprizes of ſo many People, that you will not be able to do what you*

Fac Teſtamentum dum ſanus es dum ſapiens es, dum tuus es:

In infirmitate blanditijs & minis

duceris, quo tu non vis: *you your ſelf wou'd, but only what they wou'd have you do:* Beſides, the time of the laſt Diſeaſe is too Precious and too Short, to have any Part of it ſpent in the Conſideration of Worldly affairs: But however, a Man muſt take care not to diſpoſe of his Eſtate ſo, as to forget himſelf; which he will moſt certainly do, if the Poor have no ſhare in the Diſtribution of it.

We ought to endeavour to ſpend the remainder of this Day in the Exerciſe of good Works, in a cloſs Retirement, and great inward Recollection: We ſhou'd Read ſome Spiritual Book that treats of Death: The three Diſcourſes written by Father *Colombier* on this Subject are Admirable, and may likely have a good Effect, if Read with Attention: The Precedent Meditation upon the Sentiments we ſhall have at the hour of Death, may alſo ſerve for a Spiritual Lecture.

It is fit to ſpend one hour in the Conſideration of the particular Duties of our Calling, and of all things that may give us trouble at the hour of our Death: And it will be alſo very uſeful, attentively to conſider, during that time, the Prayers that are made for Dying Perſons; ſuch as are thoſe that are ſaid at the Adminiſtration of Extream Unction, and the Recommendation of the Soul.

It is plain that a Man for that Day, ſhou'd have no Converſation with any Perſon but his Directour: Nevertheleſs one may viſit ſome Poor Sick Body, or any one a Dying,

Dying, with a deſign not only to help and Comfort him by Alms, but alſo to give our ſelves a clearer Proſpect, and a more Lively Repreſentation, of what we our ſelves ſhall one Day be: This Day of Retirement is to be ended with a Meditation upon the particular Judgment, and in conſidering the different Diſpoſition of a Lukewarm and a Fervent Soul, when they ſhall Appear before God.

The chief Fruit of ſo Chriſtian a Practice, ought to be a perfect weaning on's ſelf, from all that we ſhall be forc'd to quit at the hour of Death, an extream Horrour of Mortal Sin, a full Reformation of our Manners, and a Sincere Deſire to merit much, by the Practice of Vertues and the Exerciſe of good Works.

## Sec. III.

# Sec. III.

## *Prayers or ſhort Ejaculations to Diſpoſe on's ſelf to Dye Well.*

THE time of our Sickneſs is of all the times of our Life the moſt Precious; and every Moment of it ought to be managed with the greateſt Care that's poſſible; and yet notwithſtanding it is a time we are leaſt able to Act in; when one is Sick, all, both Body and Mind is in a Languiſhing Condition; and there is little then done, but what is done out of Habit, or Cuſtom; one is not in a Condition to make long Prayers, nor Meditations proper to touch and move us; But it will be very neceſſary to make, from time to time, ſeveral Acts of Reſignation, of Love, Contrition, Truſt and Confidence in God: And how can theſe Acts be done if a Man never Practis'd 'em before? One muſt have been accuſtom'd to them, and often made them: It was therefore thought fit, for this purpoſe, to ſet down here ſome Prayers or Ejaculations, taken, for the moſt part, out of the Scripture and Holy Fathers, that are proper to diſpoſe us to Dye well; and

and may be of great help to us in our Sickneſs, if we have taken care to make frequent uſe of 'em whil'ſt we were in Health.

*Lord, he whom thou Loveſt is Sick:* I am Sick, O Lord! It is but Juſt, *That I ſhou'd have Recourſe to you, who are my only Phyſician, I am Miſerable and Unhappy, it is fit I ſhou'd run to the Fountain of Mercies; I Dye, and I Sigh after him, who is Life it ſelf.*

*Yes my Lord you are my Phyſician, you are the Fountain; you are Mercy; you are Life it ſelf; have Mercy on me,* O JESUS *of* Nazareth, *let my Infirmities move you to Compaſſion.*

*Have Pity on me, O Lord, my Force and Strength fail me; my Soul is Troubl'd and caſt Down, and my very Bones ſeem Bruis'd and Broken with Grief and Sorrow.*

*My God Correct me not in thy Indignation, nor Chaſtiſe me in thy Anger; but Remember all thy Mercies, and have Compaſſion on me.*

*I am in great Pain, O my God! Overwhelm'd with Affliction; I ſuffer much, but my Comfort is that you will not forget me in my Troubles: Can a Mother ſo far forget her own Child, as not to be Touch'd and Griev'd at his Pain? But altho' ſhe ſhou'd forget him, yet you O Lord, have Promiſed and Proteſted, that you wou'd never forget me.*

Ecce quẽ amas infirmatur. Ægrotus ſum, ad medicum clamo; miſer ſum ad miſericordiam propero; mortuus ſum, ad vitam ſuſpiro.

† Tu es medicus, tu es Miſericordia, tu es vita. *Jeſu Nazarene* miſerere mei. *Aug Solil. cap* 2.

‡ Miſerere mei quoniam infirmus ſũ, ſana me Domine, quoniam conturbata ſunt oſſa mea. *Pſal* 6.

§ Domine ne in furore tuo arguas me, neque in ira tu corripias me; recordare miſerationum tuarum Domine. *Pſal.* 37.

* Nunquid oblivioſci poteſt Mulier infantem ſuum, ut non miſereatur filio uteri ſui, & ſi illa oblita fuerit, ego tamen non obliviſcar tui. *Iſa.* 49.

Tu noſti onus meum, quale ſit, Domine, da mihi illud patienter ferre, ut per viam Crucis extollar ad te. *Aug. Med. c. 37.* Adauge laborem modo augeas patientiam. *Aug.* Obſecro, Domine, fac Miſericordiam tuam cum ſervo tuo, dirige viam meam, ut cum ſalute revertar in Domum Domini mei.

*Thou Know'ſt O Lord my Burthen, and what pains I endure, grant me Patience I beſeech you to bear 'em, that the way of the Croſs may carry me to you.*

I ſuffer, O Lord, a great deal, but yet not near enuff, conſidering what I ought to ſuffer: *Increaſe my Pains, but Increaſe my Patience too:*

*Have Mercy on thy Servant, O Lord, and be my Guide that I may return in ſafety to my Fathers Houſe.*

My God, I wiſh I had a thouſand Lives to Offer you, I wou'd make you an Offering of 'em all; you call for what you have given me, I wiſh it were far more Worth to be Preſented to you; but ſuch as it is, I wou'd, and do freely reſign it to you, tho' it were in my power to keep it.

Yes my God, I am content with all my Heart to be depriv'd of every thing I have Lov'd upon Earth; and even of this Body of mine, which I have Lov'd but too too much.

I willingly accept of that hideous State and Condition, which my Body ſhall be ſoon Reduc'd to. I freely Conſent to it's being turn'd into Filth and Rottenneſs, and it's becoming a Prey to Worms; and I ſhou'd be but too Happy, if by it's Deſtruction I might repair the Wrongs I have done to your Divine Majeſty, by preferring before you, this very Body, which I have ſo often Studied to pleaſe.

I ſuffer

I ſuffer a great deal, O Lord, and I am ready, if it be your Will, to ſuffer yet more; my pain, how ſharp ſoever it be, is yet too light, and much too ſhort, ſince it is the laſt proof, that I ſhall give of my Love and my deſire to pleaſe you.

I do moſt willingly ſubmit my ſelf, O Lord, to all the pains of the Next Life how rigourous ſoever they may be; and altho' they ſhou'd laſt to the End of the World, it is but juſt, that you ſhou'd Glorifie your ſelf by Puniſhing me, ſince I wou'd not Glorifie you by Obeying your Will and Keeping your Commands.

I blindly Believe all that you have Reveal'd to your Holy Church here on Earth; and I firmly Hope for all, that you have given your Elect a Sight of in Heaven.

I am Senſible, Oh my God! Of the Enormity of my Crimes; and I alſo acknowledge, that I have committed more than I know or can remember; it grieves me to my Heart that I have ſerv'd ſo ill, ſo good a Maſter; but yet all my Infidelities cannot weaken the Confidence I have in your Mercy; for I am not ſo guilty, as you are Merciful.

How Criminal ſoever I am, I Hope I ſhall not be for ever Miſerable, becauſe you are infinitly Good; no, no, I Confide there will be no Hell for me, altho' I have very well Deſerv'd it; becauſe my Saviour has Merited Paradiſe for me: I truſt, O Lord, in your Mercies; and all the Devils in Hell cannot caſt me out of this Hope; their endeavours

deavours will be to no purpoſe; I ſhall for ever Sing your Mercies; I ſhall ſee you, I ſhall Poſſeſs you, and Love you Eternally.

* Magna Mater ſuſcipe filium cum tota æternitate luctantem. *Juſt. Lipſ.*

* *O moſt Holy Virgin, my Bleſſed Mother, Receive your Son, how unworthy ſoever of that Title and Quality; behold, this is the Moment wherein he is ſtruggling with Eternity; Succour him in this dangerous Moment.*

† Maria, Mater gratiæ, Mater miſericordiæ tu nos ab hoſte protege, & hora mortis ſuſcipe.

*O* Mary *Mother of Grace, Mother of Mercy, help me againſt all the Efforts of my Enemies; Aſſiſt me now and in the hour of Death; and grant, that I may in your Arm's give up my laſt Breath.*

Da Miſericordiam miſero, pœnitenti, qui tam diu peperciſti Peccatori. *S. Bernard.*

*Have Mercy, O Lord, on this Poor and Miſerable Sinner; you, who have often Pardon'd him whilſt he Offended you, have Mercy on him now, when he is Sorry for having done ſo.*

* Peccavi Domine, peccavi, & iniquitates meas agnoſco; peccavi ſuper numerus arenas maris, ſed Miſericordiæ tuæ etiam non ei *in Orat. Manaſſ.*

* *I have Sinn'd, Lord, I acknowledge my Iniquities; and own that my Sins are more in Number than the Sands of the Sea; but your Mercies are alſo without Number.*

† Doleo, Domine Deus meus, doleo, quòd pec-

† *I Repent, and am heartily Sorry, my Lord, and my God, that I have Offended you; I am extreamly griev'd for all my*

*my Offences, and ſo much the more, for that I do not find my ſelf griev'd enuff.*

cavi, & quia parum do-

leo, Maximè doleo. *Auguſt*

*Oh! How I deteſt the time, my God, when I Lov'd you not, and Abhor the Day I Offended you ſo much in?*

Væ tempori illi, Domine, in quo non te amavi; Væ

tempori illi, in quo te graviter offendi.

† *The Lord is my Light and my Safety, whom ſhall I Fear? The Lord is my Protectour, of whom then ſhall I be Afraid?*

† Dominus illuminatio mea, & ſalus mea,

quem timebo? Dominus protector vitæ meæ, à quo trepidabo? *Pſal.* 26.

* *Altho' Armies ſhou'd riſe up againſt me, my Heart ſhall not be mov'd; altho' I ſhou'd walk in the midſt of the Shadow of Death, I will fear no Evil; becauſe thou art ſtill with me.*

* Etiam ſi conſiſtant adverſum me caſtra, non timebit cor meum, ſi ambulavero in

medio umbræ mortis, non timebo mala; quoniam tu mecum es.

† *Altho' thou ſhou'dſt kill me, yet I will put my truſt in thee O Lord.*

† Etiam ſi occideris me in te

Sperabo Domine. *Job.* 13.

* *He ſhall be Incompaſs'd about with Mercy, who put's his Truſt in the Lord.*

* Sperantem in Domino

miſericordia circumdabit. *Pſal.* 13.

† *Increaſe my Faith O Lord, Increaſe my Hope, Increaſe my Charity.*

† Adauge in me, Domine,

fidem, adauge ſpem, adauge charitatem. *Pſal.* 36.

* *My*

* Paratum cor meum Deus, paratum cor meum. *Pſal.* 36.

* *My Heart is Ready, my Heart is Ready, O my God.*

† Sive morimur, ſive vivimus Domini ſumus. *Rom.* 14.

† *Whether we Dye, or whether we Live, we are the Lord's.*

* Dominus eſt faciat quod bonum eſt in oculis ſuis. 1 *Reg.*

* *It is the Lord, let him do what is Good in his own Eyes.*

† *If we have Receiv'd good things from the Hand of the Lord, ſhall we not alſo bear with evil things?*

* *We ſuffer juſtly, O Lord, becauſe we have Sinn'd againſt thee.*

† Si bona ſuſcepimus de manu Domini, mala quare non ſuſtinebimus? *Job.* * Juſtè patimur, Domine, quia peccavimus tibi.

THE

1867 - 22nd Sund. after Pent.

# THE FIRST MEDITATION. OF The Importance of our Salvation.

## I. Point.

*The affair of our Salvation is the moſt Important of all affairs.*

CONSIDER that of all Affairs there is none of ſo great importance as the Affair of our Salvation: Upon the good or bad Succeſs of this, depends a happy, or an unhappy Eternity: All other Affairs are permitted but ſo far, as they may help us to ſucceed well in this; this Affair once loſt, all is loſt; becauſe God himſelf, who includes all that's Good, and out of whom there can be no good, is irrecoverably and for ever loſt. *February and Auguſt.*

*February* and *August.*

Our Salvation alone, to ſpeak properly, is our own Affair; all others are forreign to us; in doing other things, a Man do's the Affair of his Children, of his Friends, of his Family, of the State, or of the Community: But by theſe preciſely, we do not do our own Affair; all theſe things are Temporal Affairs; but our Salvation is the Affair of Eternity.

Tho' other Affairs, how important ſoever they may ſeem, ſhou'd not ſucceed, the Evil is not without remedy; and altho' it were, yet provided the Affair of our Salvation ſucceeds, there is nothing loſt; the loſs of our Souls only is irreparable, and to deplore it ſufficiently, Eternity it ſelf will be too ſhort.

Can a Man Comfort himſelf for this loſs, by reflecting upon his having ſucceeded in all his other Affairs, which in reality were of no conſequence; and his haveing neglected this only, which alone was the Affair of Eternity? Tho' we ſhou'd Live in obſcurity, and be forgotten, without Friends, without Support, and ſhou'd Dye in want, yet it wou'd be of little Importance, ſo we cou'd but be Sav'd: But if we are Damn'd, what will it avail us to have been Rich and Powerfull in the World. Tho' the whole Univers ſhou'd enter into League againſt a Man, it cannot take away Heaven from him, and make him Eternally Miſerable: On the other ſide, ſhou'd the whole World, conſpire in his Favour, it cannot make him happy, if he be Damn'd; I do not ſay

happy

happy, but even leſs Miſerable: *What will it avail a Man to gain the whole World, if he looſe his Soul? And what can be given him in exchange, to make amends for ſo great a Loſs?*

Quid proderit homini, ſi univerſum mundum lucretur, &c.

Oh that the Affair of Eternity which is the moſt important of all the Affairs we have upon our Hands, and in reality, the only important one, ſhou'd notwithſtanding be that, which we moſt of all neglect, and which we take leaſt to Heart.

*Februar.* and *Auguſt.*

Study, buſineſs, diverſions, viſits of civility and converſation, all ſeem to us of importance, and wholly take up our time: A Man has never leaſure enuff to withdraw himſelf from theſe kind of Affairs, or to put one of them off to another time; but if it be, to apply himſelf ſeriouſly to the buſineſs of his Salvation, he will always think that too ſoon, and reckon he ſhall ſtill have time enuff for it; and what is yet more ſurprizing, he will never be at leaſure for it.

To ſpeak the truth, it muſt needs follow, that we have but a very ſlender Idea, of Eternal Salvation, ſince we concern our ſelves ſo little about it. Shou'd we be willing to employ no more time nor endeavours, in the Affairs of the World, or in our Studies, than we ſpend about the buſineſs of our Salvation?

What Man tho' never ſo little Zealous or Charitable, cou'd neglect his Salvation, if it depended upon him, more than we do our ſelves, whilſt it only depends upon our own care of it?

*Februar.* and *Auguſt.*

What care do's not every Man take to ſucceed in other buſineſs? If it be but to place out one of his Children, or to enter into a partnerſhip with ſome Merchant, he enquires about, conſults and informs himſelf fully; and there are no meaſures, or precautions imaginable, which he do's not take to hinder any Miſcarriage, never thinking he has done enuff; but if he be but oblidg'd to ſpend ſome little time about the buſineſs of his Salvation, how ſmall ſoever it be, he always thinks it too much.

The Affair of our Salvation is the Affair of Eternity; but an Affair which cannot be done but in time, and it is neceſſary, to employ all our time in the doing of it. God has given us our whole Life to think on't, and judg'd that we cou'd not have leſs time to ſucceed in it; and yet we think a much leſs time will ſerve our turn for it.

If we wou'd but give the hundred part of the time and application to the Affair of our Salvation, which we give to Temporal Affairs, we ſhou'd be great Saints; and tho' this be *The only neceſſary Affair*, yet we will hardly allow any time for it; and what little we do allow, we complain of as too much.

*Unum neceſſarium.*

To conſider our Conduct, one might ſay, that we believe God is our Debter, and very much oblig'd to us for Saving us. If a Student, or a Man of Buſineſs, do's but ſpend a whole Day in acquitting himſelf of the obligations he lies under as a Chriſtian,

he

he will commonly be ſayd to have loſt a Day; but let him imploy whole Months about a piece of Wit, or the affairs of the World, he will be ſayd to have labor'd to good purpoſe, and to have ſpent his time well. *Februar.* and *Auguſt.*

Salvation is our great and principal buſineſs; and it is well known, that all other affairs may be ſo ſwallow'd up by ſome one great affair, that a Man can hardly have time to think of any of them, and he will be eaſily comforted for the loſs of all the reſt, ſo he do but ſucceed in that.

Men uſually put of the buſineſs of their Salvation to their laſt fit of Sickneſs; that is to ſay, they deſign, for the buſineſs of Eternity, the moſt important buſineſs of Life, and which requir's the whole time of Life; a time, when they are no longer able to labour in any Temporal buſineſs, even of the ſmalleſt conſequence; a time, wherein they are, in reality, unable to do any thing.

Wou'd God be miſtaken ſhou'd he ſay to us that all other things were of no conſequence? And wou'd he have miſemploy'd all his Care and all his Providence in reducing all other things to this? Is God ſo ſmall a thing, he who comprehends, and in effect is all things, that it ſhou'd be indifferent to us whether we get or whether we loſe him? To what end are all thoſe Tears, and all thoſe ſad Repentances in Hell, if the good they have loſt deſerves

*Februar.* and *Auguſt.*

to be ſo little ſought after? But why do they tremble at the thought only of Eternity, if indeed it be ſo ſmall a matter to be Eternally Damn'd? And if Men do truely believe that to be Damn'd is ſo terrible a thing, how comes it to paſs, that they can Live in Peace and Quiet, whilſt they are hazarding their All, and are ſo little concern'd for the buſineſs of their Salvation?

Oh my God! How many precious Days have been ill employ'd, how many good Hours loſt? Unhappy that I am, for haveing ſpent ſo much time in doing nothing; but ſhall I not be much more Unhappy, if I do not from this very Moment begin to labour ſeriouſly in the work of my Salvation?

What do I wait for O Lord? For a time to come? Alas! Perhaps the time is not to come, but already paſt to me. Do I wait for your Solliciting me? But when did you leave of doing ſo? And how long have you Sollicited me in Vain? Muſt the Grace alſo which you now give me ſtill be loſt, and prove quite unprofitable to me?

How long ſhall I paſs away the beſt Days of my Life in vain Amuſements? And yet be the firſt to condemn 'em? And ſhall I condemn theſe vain Amuſements, for no other end, but to make my ſelf the more inexcuſable, by continuing to loſe in them, the time deſign'd for the buſineſs of my Salvation?

How long ſhall I think that neceſſary, which I know to be of no conſequence in order

der to the next Life, whilſt in the mean time I only neglect the affair of Eternity? *Februar.* and *Auguſt.*

Alas my God! What affliction, what deſpair ſhall I be in at the hour of Death, when I ſhall behold the reaſons and the means I had to work out my Salvation? When I ſhall reflect upon the time and the thoughts I have at preſent to go about it, If I ſhou'd ſpend the ſmall remainder of my Life, as I have hitherto done?

Oh my God! You have not hitherto Puniſh'd me, altho' I have deſerv'd it, I do already O Lord count upon your Grace, altho' I do not Merit it: This is the Day, which was particularly deſtin'd for my Converſion; and I will keep the Reſolution I have now made better than all my former: I believe, I am fully convinc'd, and I plainly ſee, that there is on Earth but one only important affair, that of my Eternal Salvation; which alone I am now ſeriouſly reſolv'd to begin.

## II. Point.

### *The affair of our Salvation is our only affair.*

*February.* and *August.*

CONSIDER that the affair of Eternal Salvation, is not only the moſt important of all affairs, but properly ſpeaking, the only affair we have, and in which we ought to buſy our ſelves, that we may not be buſied unprofitably? All that Worldly Men call great affairs, are not properly affairs, at leaſt they are not our affairs, ſince by doing them we do other Mens buſineſs rather than our own; and commonly it is for thoſe who are to come after us for whom we Labour.

There is no Worldly buſineſs, that may not be done by another, or that may not be abſolutly left undone, without making a Man eternally unhappy; the buſineſs of Salvation, is the only buſineſs, that cannot be done but by one's ſelf; and which cannot be diſpens'd with, without being irrecoverably loſt.

This is the one only neceſſary thing, of which JESUS CHRIST do's ſo often ſpeak to us; this our only buſineſs: Only, becauſe it is that alone which only deſerves our Application; becauſe this alone requir's our

our whole application; infine only, becauſe this alone depends upon our application. *Februar.* and *Auguſt.*

This is the only affair af all the World. Of the King in the Goverment of his Kingdom; of the Prelate in the Adminiſtration of his Dioces; of the Learn'd Man in his Studies; of the Souldier in War; of the Merchant in his Traffick; of the Artizan in his Workmanſhip. It is not neceſſary that a Man ſhou'd be a King, a Prelate, a Souldier, a Merchant or an Artificer; it is not neceſſary, he ſhou'd be Learn'd and Knowing; but 'tis neceſſary, he ſhou'd work out his Salvation, and be Sav'd. Parro unũ eſt neceſſarium.

In ordinary affairs, a Man has always ſome kind of redreſs, if not in this Life, at leaſt in the other: In the affair of Salvation, there is no redreſs; whoever has left this affair undone, has done nothing; and he will never again be in a condition to do it: Whoever Damn's himſelf is Damn'd for ever.

Wou'd an Embaſſadour, returning from a forreign Country, be well receiv'd, if he ſhou'd ſay, I did great things where I was, I made my ſelf Friends, I got Reputation, I Inrich'd and Diverted my ſelf; in a word, I did every thing, except the only thing which I was ſent for.

We are come into the World for no other End, but to work out our Salvation: This was Gods only deſign in Creating us, and in Preſerving us on Earth: Shall we then be willingly receiv'd at the hour of Death, if we ſay Lord, we have done great

Matters;

*Februar.* and *Auguſt.*

Matters, we have got our ſelves a good Reputation, we have heap'd up a great deal of Wealth, and we have labour'd with ſucceſs in the Salvation of others, we have neglected nothing, but our own? That is to ſay we have done all things, except that for which alone you Created us. And yet alas! It is but after this manner, that the moſt part of Men will then be able to ſpeak; becauſe it is thus, that moſt Men Live; and if we our ſelves were now to appear before God, and to give an account of our Lives, cou'd we be able to ſpeak otherwiſe?

But what is all this which we Daily hear? Which we are ſo much and ſo often told of, Salvation and Eternity? Is it then true indeed, that there is an Eternity to follow this Life? And that this Life is not granted us for any other purpoſe, but to Labour in the buſineſs of that Eternity? Is it alſo true, that if I loſe my Soul, all things are irrecoverably loſt to me? And that to Live, as the moſt part of Men do, and as perhaps I my ſelf have hetherto done, is to loſe my Soul? Is it likewiſe true, that I ſhall be almoſt in Deſpair at the hour of my Death, for not having done what I might, and what I was oblig'd to have done? And that I ſhall then count that for nothing, which at preſent employs me moſt and takes up all my time?

Do we then my God, perfectly believe that the affair of our Salvation is our great

affair?

affair? The Damn'd, and the Devils themſelves believe it, in Theory and Speculation, as well and better then we do; but do we believe it in Practice, which only is the belief of Saints? *Februar.* and *Auguſt.*

What? Shall the affairs of others be affairs for us, our Temporal affairs, our Divertiſments, or the Duties of Civility; And ſhall the affair of Eternal Salvation, be the laſt of our affairs? Nay ſhall it even be not ſo much as any affair at all for us?

What do's it advantage us, that God has given us Reaſon, if it be uſeleſs in that only thing, for which it was given us; that is for our Salvation? Alas! We make uſe, if one may ſay ſo, of this Reaſon, we waſt or miſemploy it, in forming and carrying on deſigns of no conſequence; we play the part of skilful and able Men, in trifles, in matters of nothing; and every Man ſtriv's to give wiſe Counſel, and to make a ſhew, of perfect maſterly Prudence in all things; and yet in the mean time, we are wanting in the main, and when Eternity is ſpoken of, one might lawfully ſay we have hardly Common Senſe.

But that which is yet more ſtrange is, that all the world are agreed about the importance of Salvation, and the unprofitableneſs of all other things; and yet notwithſtanding, Men apply themſelves to thoſe other things, and only neglect the buſineſs of their Salvation.

Every Man ſtrives to ſhew he has more Adreſs and Prudence in the affairs of the

*Februar.* and *Auguſt.*

World than another, and indeavours to ſhew himſelf very skilfull in the management of 'em: To neglect buſineſs, to be ignorant of the art of ſucceeding in it, is to want Wit, to loſe Reputation and not to know how to Live: But to neglect the affair of Salvation, not to be more concern'd to ſucceed in that, than if a Man by loſing his Soul, were to loſe nothing, is not in this Age a Reproach, for which one wou'd bluſh; for they no longer make a Miſtery of it; it is publickly known, and they themſelves acknowledge it; nay they brag of it; and how indevout ſoever, and irregular a Man is, it do's not hinder him from paſſing for an honeſt and an able Man, provided he underſtands but the art to make himſelf be eſteem'd, and to thrive in the World.

It wou'd be an injury to a Man, to tell him he did not underſtand his buſineſs; but it is not accounted any, to accuſe us for not minding the buſineſs of our Salvation; the reaſon without doubt muſt be, that Men do not reckon the affair of Salvation an affair. Since when, my God! Has this one only neceſſary thing, been no longer accounted that, which you your ſelf have judg'd and declar'd it to be?

We look on in cold Blood, and without any concern ſee our Souls loſt, and are unreaſonable in nothing, but our own proper Intereſt. We cannot deny, but that the Saints were truly Wiſe, and yet their Wiſedom conſiſted but in preferring the buſineſs of

of their Salvation before all other buſineſs; but in looking upon that, as their only affair, their great and important affair. *Februar.* and *Auguſt.*

Are we wiſer than they? We, who act directly contrary to what they did? The buſineſs of their Salvation alone took up the whole time of their Life: But we may ſay, they were very much in the wrong, to be at ſo great expence, and to imploy ſo much time in a thing that coſts us ſo little; or rather, that we our ſelves are very mad, for ſpending ſo little time in an affair, which alone requires all our time.

Have we found out a new way which JESUS CHRIST himſelf was ignorant of? Or is Eternall Salvation, which coſt him all his Blood, fallen in Value, and no longer worth ſo great a Price?

What are at preſent the Thoughts of thoſe great Wits, whom we eſteem'd the Intelligences or Movers of the Political World? Of thoſe extraordinary Men, who had their Heads always fill'd with a great part of the World, and were continually buſied either in diſturbing, or in pacifying the Univers? Of thoſe Rich Men, as the Scripture calls them, who, as touching the affair of Eternity, have paſs'd over their whole Life in a kind of Lethargy and Inſenſibility? What muſt, I ſay, the thoughts of thoſe Men be, if having ſucceeded in all other affairs, they have been ſo unhappy, as to have miſcarried in the great affair of their Salvation?

*Februar.* and *Auguſt.*

It is not for having Lov'd their eaſe to exceſs; it is not for want of having Labour'd even in their Sleep, which was never free from trouble; on the contrary, it is for having graſp'd at too much uſeleſs buſineſs, for having Labour'd much to little purpoſe; and for not having done the only thing they had to do, that the moſt part of Men are Damn'd.

Alas Lord! Shall not I be of the Number, if I continue to Live as I have hetherto Liv'd? What have I done for my Salvation? And what have I not done for my Damnation? My Salvation is the only thing I have neglected; and whoever wou'd conſider my Inſenſibility, might well ſay, I was not concern'd for the loſs of my Soul: But I hope, my God, that Men will ſee, by the change of my Life, that I have very much alter'd my Thoughts. My God! I deſire to be Sav'd, and my Salvation ſhall hereafter be the only affair, that ſhall have all my care and all my time; ſince this, and this alone, is that which requires it. You give me time to repair my Faults, and will not refuſe me Grace: I acknowledge that I have but one important buſineſs; I am reſolv'd to ſet my ſelf to it, and I Hope you will give me the Grace to ſucceed in it.

THE

# THE SECOND MEDITATION.

## OF

## The motives which Men have continually to Labour in the buſineſs of their Salvation.

## I. Point.

### *Of the motives which are common to all Chriſtians.*

CONSIDERING what God has done for our Salvation, a Man might well enuff ſay, that his Happineſs depended on ours; ſo earneſt do's he ſeem, and ſo much taken up, to make us happy. *Februar.* and *Auguſt.*

God having firſt made Man Free, and Maſter of his own Fortune, what has he not

*Februar.* and *Auguſt.*

not afterwards done, and what do's he not ſtill do, to gain his Heart? He aſkes him this Heart of his; he ſollicit's, and he preſſes him for it, ſometimes he makes uſe of Promiſes, ſometimes of Threats; he leaves no Stone unturn'd to win it. But why ſo much earneſtneſs? Becauſe our Damnation depends upon our ſelves, and that God do's paſſionatly deſire our Salvation.

Have we ever well comprehended the Miſtery of our Redemption, or ſhall we be ever able to comprehend it aright? God condeſcends almoſt to Annihilate himſelf, as one may ſay, to make us underſtand what value he ſet's upon our Souls, and how earneſtly he wiſhes our Salvation. Cou'd one poſſibly imagine that God ſhou'd Humble himſelf ſo low, as for the Salvation of us Men, to make himſelf Man? And yet this Miracle has been perform'd; and how great ſoever it was, God did not think it ſufficient to engage us to Love him: He judg'd it further neceſſary, that a Life of three and thirty Years, ſpent in Poverty and Sufferings, ſhou'd be ended by the moſt Cruel of Deaths. Conſider how great, how vaſt a rate he ſet upon our Souls: All the Blood, all the Suffering, the Life and Death of a God Man: Behold what they have coſt; and can it then be a ſmall thing to Loſe or Damn them?

God did not judge by the great expence he was at, that he had purchas'd our Salvation

vation at too dear a rate: And ſhall we believe we can pay too much for it? Can we ever pay even enuff for it? What Intereſt can God have in our being Sav'd? And yet, notwithſtanding, cou'd he poſſibly have done more than he has done for it? Is it not our Intereſt to be Sav'd? whence then do's it come to paſs, that we our ſelves do ſo little for it? *Februar.* and *Auguſt.*

Oh, what an infinit number of Perſons are there at this very preſent in Deſpair, for not having done what I am able to do, and I my ſelf ſhall one Day be almoſt in Deſpair too, for not having done it! Is there need of any more powerful Motive to make us do it now inceſſantly, and without intermiſſion?

We are yet in a condition, thanks be to God, to work out our Salvation, we are ſure that this is the time, and that God do's now alſo offer us the Grace to do it. Theſe Reflections, which we make, and the Thoughts which we have, are evident proofs of it: Who has told us, that this is not the important moment, to which our Predeſtination is determin'd, and which our Salvation do's depend upon? I am certain, that I can now ſecure my Salvation by a ſincere Converſion; and I have great reaſon, at leaſt, to doubt, that if I do not now Turn and Repent, I may never be again in a Condition to do it: To what purpoſe then ſhou'd I delay it, even for one Moment?

Let

*Februar.* and *Auguſt.*

Let us value ous ſelves as much at leaſt, as the Devil do's: It is but reaſonable, that we ſhou'd be as earneſt to Save ourſelves, as the Devil is to Deſtroy us. This is indeed a ſhameful compariſon, but yet it is true, that the Devil makes a greater account of our Souls, than we our ſelves do; for altho' he is of a far higher and more noble Nature, than that of Man, and extreamly Proud, yet there is nothing ſo mean and troubleſome, which he is not ready to do, to ruin a Soul; and how long ſoever we reſiſt, he is never weary, nor gives off his purſuit: Oh! how aſſiduous and diligent is he to Tempt us, and how very skilfully do's he make uſe of the ſmalleſt occaſions he can find, to ruin us? Oh my God! Muſt we learn from the Devil what value we ought to ſet upon our own Souls? And muſt Chriſtians ſtand in need to reflect upon his earneſtneſs to Damn them, that they may be furniſh'd with motives to Labour ſeriouſly in the buſineſs of their Salvation?

Oh my God! Is it that you have not done enuff for my Salvation, is it neceſſary to ſeek elſe where for new reaſons to have a juſt ſenſe of the worth of a Soul, which you have Redeem'd at ſo high a rate? You have purchas'd me my Lord, I am therefore yours by a double Title; what motive can I ever find able to hinder me from being hereafter wholly yours?

II. Point.

## II. Point.

### *Of the Motives which every Man has in Particular.*

CONSIDER what a powerful motive the particular care God takes of our Salvation, is, to oblige us to Labour in it: That God Shou'd, as one may ſay, wholly apply himſelf to this affair, as if he had none elſe but us in the World, and cou'd not Live without us; and yet that we ſhou'd have need of a more powerful and engageing motive than that, to oblige us to apply our ſelves to it, is very ſtrange and wonderful. *Februar.* and *Auguſt.*

With what Wiſdom has he not manag'd all the Moments ever ſince we were born, to engage us to Love him? What ſingular Providence in the economy of our Salvation? Is it a ſmall fauour to be born of Chriſtian Parents, whilſt ſo many others are born of Infidels? Is it a leſs Grace to have been bred up in a Church, which perhaps, I had never enter'd into, if I had been brought up in Error? What a Happineſs to have been inſtructed, by a Perſon from whom I have receiv'd ſuch good Example? And to have found ſo good a Friend, from whom I have receiv'd ſuch wiſe

wiſe Counſels? We thought that all this, had happen'd by Chance: But we ſhall one Day ſee, that this was the effect of a ſingular Providence: We were inconſolable for the Death of this Relation, and of that Friend; we eſteem'd our ſelves unhappy for having been in want, for having had but indifferent Talents, for having Liv'd in obſcurity and been forgotten; we ſhall one Day know, that it is to this Separation, to theſe pretended misfortuns, that we ow our Converſion, and our Eternal Salvation.

*Februar.* and *Auguſt.*

There are very few, who have not fallen into ſome danger, who have not been Sick, and that perhaps to extremity: God, who was deſirous of our Salvation, foreſaw, that if we had Dyed in that Condition, we had been inevitably loſt. Some Spiritual Book Read ſeemingly by Chance, and yet ſo much to the purpoſe; Some happy Meeting, unforeſeen indeed, but ſo proper for the deſign God had to Convert us; a ſingle Inſpiration which a Man has had; one Reflection made, one Word heard, has often been the Source, and occaſion of a Perfect Converſion. If it has been our good Fortune to be Conſecrated to the Service of God, let us call to mind all that paſt at our Vocation: Let us a little Examin, when we have leaſure, all it's circumſtances, and the ſmall Miracles that were in them; how neceſſary it was, that at ſuch a time we ſhou'd have been with ſuch Perſons and in ſuch places; that the Pleaſures of the World ſhou'd have had no

Allurements

Allurements for us, at a time when Naturally ſpeaking, they ought to have been moſt Charming; that the example of the great number of People, pleas'd with the Delights of the World, and even the Love of Parents, ſhou'd not have been Chains ſtrong enough to hold us; that the Auſterity of a Life, which had nothing in it, but what was diſcourageing, ſhou'd not have been able to frighten us, that we ſhou'd have had generoſity enuff, to ſurmount the greateſt Obſtacles; altho' all theſe things ſhou'd have been found in a Perſon put already out of Love with the World by many unlucky Accidents, and frighten'd at the thoughts of an approaching Death, they wou'd ſtill have been viſible effects of Divine Grace: But that they ſhou'd have happen'd in an Age, wherein we were not diſabl'd from reliſhing of Pleaſures, not remov'd from the hopes of a great Fortune, and a long Life; what can we call a Miracle, if that be none? *Februar.* and *Auguſt.*

But whence do theſe good thoughts proceed, in a time, when we ſo little deſerv'd to have them? Why ſhou'd I amongſt ſo many others, who wou'd have done much better than I, be perhaps, the only Perſon, whom God has given this thought to? And if there are a great many more to be found, who might have had the ſame thoughts, the ſame true deſire, and it may be, more merit than I; whence comes it, that they were not Choſen, or if they were

*Februar.* and *Auguſt.*

were choſen, whence is it, that they have not perſever'd? Poſſibly God himſelf has permitted, that they ſhou'd not Perſever, that I might have their Place.

Add to all theſe ſingular Benefits the Holy Inſpirations, and the many other powerful Succours, which he prevents us with every Day. If theſe viſible proofs of God's particular care of our Salvation, do not ingage us to Love and Serve him, with our whole Heart, and without reſerve, we are, of all Men, the moſt ungrateful; and do not we deſerve to be puniſh'd without Mercy, and without Delay? Theſe are great Subjects of our Meditation; which we ought to make ſerious and frequent Reflections upon. Since they are the ſenſible effects of God's ſingular Providence over us, and the viſible Marks of his extraordinary Love for us preferably to ſo many others: It ſeems to me, there can be nothing more proper than theſe things, to Inſpire us with a lively Faith, with Confidence, great Generoſity, and an ardent Love and Affection for God; yet perhaps there are many to be found, who never once thought of any of 'em.

Oh my God! what do we think of, when we do not reflect upon ſuch Important and Comfortable Truths as theſe are? Cou'd we poſſibly avoid Labouring ſeriouſly in the buſineſs of our Salvation, if we did but often think what God has done, and Daily do's to Save us?

The

The Devil indeed has great reaſon to make uſe of all his Arts, to hinder us from reflecting on theſe kind of things, ſo proper to inſpire us with a true deſire of Serving God; but we our ſelves are very much in the wrong, to paſs over, ſo ſlightly, motives ſo preſſing and ſo powerfull, to make us continually aſpire to the Perfection of the State we are plac'd in. *Februar.* and *Auguſt.*

Let us conſider what returns we have made, and how faithfully we have anſwer'd theſe great Favours and Deſigns of God, in taking ſo much care of our Salvation; Let us examin how negligent we have hitherto been, and ſince we are convinced of his ſingular goodneſs towards us, and of his willingneſs and deſire to make us Saints, let us no longer defer correſponding with ſo advantagious a will, but from this moment take ſuch ſure meaſures, as may ſecure us from failing to become Saints: This ought to be the Fruit of this Meditation, and of this Days Retreat: But let us take care, that this reſolution becomes not ineffectual, as many others heretofore made have been.

THE

*January* and *July.*

# THE THIRD MEDITATION.

## UPON

## The thoughts which we ſhall have at the hour of Death.

See the Third Meditation of the Month of *January* and *July*. Page. 67.

# THE FIRST MEDITATION. OF The Smalneſs of the number Sav'd.

## I. Point.

*That according as we are taught to Believe, there will be but few Sav'd.*

REMEMBER that it is not only with reference to the almoſt numberleſs croud of Infidels, which take up more than two thirds of the Earth, that the number of thoſe who ſhall be Sav'd is Small: But that it is alſo with reference to the almoſt infinit number of Chriſtians, who are loſt in the *March* and *Septemb.*

*March* and *Septemb.*

right Religion. There are few Truths in Chriſtianity more clearly ſet forth than this is: *Enter in at the ſtreight Gate*, ſays the Son of God to us; *for wide is the Gate, and broad is the Way, which leads to Deſtruction*, and *many there be that find it;* but *ſtreight is the Gate*, and *narrow the Way, which leads to Life*, and *few there be that find it.*

*Many are call'd*, ſays he in another place, *but* even of them *few are Choſen*: He repeats the ſame thing, in the ſame terms in another place, and the Apoſtle, who was full of the ſame Spirit, compares all Chriſtians, indifferently, to Men running a Race: *All Run*, ſays he, *but there is but one that gets the Prize;* comparing thoſe who ſhall be Sav'd, to him that wins the Race; and to make us the better underſtand that he ſpeaks of Believers, he brings down an Example of the *Iſraëlites; You are not Ignorant*, ſays he, *my Brethren, that our Forefathers were under the ſame Cloud*, which guided them; *and that they paſt over the Sea on Foot dry-ſhod*, under the Conduct of *Moyſes*, *and they all Eat of the ſame Spiritual Food:* All thoſe Miracles were done to lead them into the Land of Promiſe; and yet how many of them, think you, got thither? Of above eighteen hundred thouſand Souls, that went out of *Ægypt*, there were only two, *Joſue* and *Caleb*, who had the good Fortune to enter into it.

*Iſay*

*Iſay* compares the number of the Elect, to the few Olives that remain upon the Trees after Harveſt; and to the few Grapes, which the moſt exact and diligent gatherers do leave behind. *March* and *Septemb.*

Beſides the Terms and Compariſons which the Scripture makes uſe of, to convince us of this terrible Truth; we have the Examples of all the Inhabitants of the World; of whom but one ſingle Family eſcap'd the Fury of the Deluge; of five great Cities four Perſons only were Sav'd; and of ſo many Paralyticks that waited at the Fiſh Pool, there was but one ſingle Man cur'd. And this dreadfull Truth, which the Son of God ſo often repeated to his Diſciples, induc'd one of 'em to put him this Queſtion; *Lord, will there be but a few Sav'd?* Our Saviour, for fear of frightning them eluded the propoſition, and inſtead of an Anſwer, ſayd to them; *My little ones, the Gate of Heaven is Narrow, but do you your beſt Endeavours to enter in at it.*

Of all the Truths of our Religion, there is none, methinks, ſo terrible, or which ought to frighten us more; and yet alaſs! Can we ſay that we are much mov'd by it?

Altho' it ſhou'd be true that of ten thouſand Perſons there ſhou'd be but one Damn'd, yet ought I to tremble and fear leaſt I ſhou'd be that one unhappy Man: Alas! Perhaps of ten thouſand there ſhall hardly be one Sav'd; and yet I Live in quiet, and fear nothing. Ah! Have I not

*March and Septemb.*

ſo much the more Reaſon to fear, that I fear ſo little? My ſecurity in this point, is perhaps, nothing elſe but an effect of my Error and my Blindneſs; which concealing the danger I am in diſables me either to prevent, or avoid it.

If it be but ſayd that a Ship is loſt, how many People are in pain? And altho' there be above ten thouſand at Sea, the news of the Shipwrack of one makes all Traders afraid: And what! Do we not know, that of all thoſe who are this Day alive on Earth, the greateſt part will be ſadly Shipwrack'd; that very few will arrive at the Port of Eternal Salvation? And who has told that I ſhall be of this Number?

If the Son of God had ſayd, that all Chriſtians ſhou'd be Sav'd, and that he had alſo ſayd this as plainly, as he has ſayd that the Number of the Elect ſhall be but ſmall; cou'd we poſſibly Live in a greater tranquillity, or be leſs concern'd than we are on account of our Salvation? But are we in leſs danger, or have we leſs to fear for being ſo little ſenſible of our loſs? Alas! Altho' we ſhou'd have no other Reaſon to fear our Salvation, but this very tranquillity wherein we live, and the inſenſibility we are in, we ſhou'd have but too much Reaſon to doubt our being Sav'd.

But Men do not think of it: And what do they think of then, if not of Eternity? Is it that they do not Believe it? But can they Believe it and not fear it? Or can they fear it and not think of it? Whence can

can this pretended intrepidity upon the proſpect of ſo great a danger come? The greateſt Saints have all their Life long been in fear for their Salvation: Saint *Paul* himſelf was not free from this ſaving fear; and yet we are not at all afraid; for if we did but truly fear, we cou'd not poſſibly but change our Lives. *March and Septemb.*

If Men at Sea do but fear a Shipwrack, they Sacrifice all to ſave their Lives; they caſt over-board their moſt Precious things; and boggle not to loſe in one Minute the Fruit of their whole Lives Labour: But if their Eternal Salvation be at ſtake, Men had rather run the riske of all, than deprive themſelves of any thing tho' never ſo little.

Alas! If a Contagious Diſeaſe be but ſpread all over a City, every one is afraid of himſelf: What Remedies, what Preſervatives do they not take? They deprive themſelves of the moſt Innocent Diverſions, break off all Converſation and Commerce, and condemn them ſelves to a frightfull Solitude. My God! Why all theſe Precautions? Is it becauſe they are afraid to Dye? And yet we are not afraid to be Damn'd, tho' we know that the greateſt part of the World will be Damn'd: And will we not, to aſſure our Salvation, find one Day for a Retreat? Be afraid of the danger, and do any thing to prevent it? Is it that we depend upon the goodneſs of our Vocation, and upon the holyneſs of our State, upon the Talents God has given us, or upon the

*March and Septemb.*

Means he offers us? Alas! Who ever had a better call to Royalty than *Saul?* Or than *Judas* to an Apoſtleſhip? And yet notwithſtanding *Saul* was caſt off, and *Judas* loſt himſelf, even in his attendance upon CHRIST. *Salomon*, the Wiſeſt of Men, has left us in doubt of his Salvation; and a great number of Chriſtian Hero's, who ſpent the greateſt part of their Lives in the Exerciſe of a moſt Perfect Vertue, by being too confident and ſure of their Salvation, have loſt themſelves, and with all their pretended Merits came at laſt to be Damn'd.

And ſhall there be nothing Lord, for me to Fear? Alas! The very want of this Saving fear, ought to make me afraid. Not to fear being loſt, is to be loſt: And there can be nothing in this world I ought more to apprehend then being Damn'd at laſt.

O my Lord! Who has given all thy Blood to Save me, and who do's me the Favour to make me ſee the Danger I am in, ſuffer me not to Deſtroy my ſelf; and what, my God, muſt I be of the number of the Reprobate? It is true Lord, that I have hetherto follow'd the Croud, and walk'd in the broad Way; but, my God, I am fully reſolv'd for the future to walk in the narrow Way, and to do my beſt endeavours to enter in at the ſtreight Gate.

Tho' Men ſhou'd run head-long in Crouds to Hell, and tho' there ſhou'd be but one of all the City Sav'd, I earneſtly deſire to be that one; and I Hope, by the help of your

your Grace, to be that Man; ſince I know, that my being of the ſmall number of the Elect depends but upon my ſelf. Altho' the Graces you have hetherto given me have had no effect; yet I have all the reaſon to Hope, that, which you now give me, will prove efficacious. Yes yes, my God, how ſmall ſoever the number is of thoſe, that ſhall be Sav'd, I will, what ever it coſt me, be of this ſmall number: And the thoughts you now Inſpire me with, do aſſure me, that you your ſelf are willing I ſhou'd be of it. *March* and *Septemb.*

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## II. Point.

### *That according to Reaſon, the number of thoſe to be Sav'd will be but ſmall.*

CONSIDER that altho' we did not know even what Faith teaches us concerning this terrible Truth, Reaſon alone wou'd be ſufficient, to make us perceive the ſmalneſs of the number of thoſe who are to be Sav'd. To know this, we need but conſider what we are oblig'd to do, and the courſe which we afterwards take to do it.

To be Sav'd, it is abſolutly neceſſary to Live according to the Maxims of the Goſpel;

*March* and *Septemb.*

and is the number of them who in this Age Live according to thoſe Maxim's very great? To be Sav'd, it is neceſſary to declare on's ſelf openly the Diſciple of JESUS CHRIST. Alas! How many are now a Days aſham'd to appear ſuch? A Man, who deſires to be Sav'd, muſt Renounce either Actually, or in Affection, all that he poſſeſſes, and Daily carry his Croſs.

The *Phariſees* were a People very Regular in ſhew, extreamly Mortifi'd, and ſeemingly Irreproachable in their Conduct and Manners; and yet notwithſtanding, if we are not more Solidly and more Perfectly Vertuous than they, we ſhall never enter into the Kingdom of Heaven.

It is a great matter not to Revenge; it is yet a greater to Pardon Injuries: And yet all this is not enuff to be Sav'd. To be Sav'd, we muſt Love even thoſe who Perſecute us: It is not ſufficient to condemn bad Actions; over and above this, one muſt have a horrour for the leſt criminal Thought. It is not only unlawful to retain the goods of another; but we are yet further oblig'd, to aſſiſt and to relieve, out of our own, the wants and neceſſities of the Poor; Humility, which ought to make a part of the Chriſtians Character, admits neither of Pride nor Ambition. Let us Labour as much as we pleaſe, if we do not truly Labour for God, we ſhall never have any thanks for our pains. Let us keep what meaſurs we will, whatever ſhew we make, God will not be paid with Exteriours, he will

will have the Heart, and will be Ador'd in Spirit and in Truth; that is to ſay, he will be Serv'd with Integrity and Sincerity. One ſingle, Mortal Sin robs us, in a moment, of all the Merit, of the longeſt and holieſt Life. And a Hell of a more than a hundred thouſand millions of Years will not ſuffice for the Puniſhment of a Sin of one Moment. It is an Article of Faith, that the Covetous, the Unjuſt, the Detractors, the Proud, the Adulterers, and the Fornicators, ſhall never enter into the Kingdom of Heaven. Therefore to enter into Heaven, a Man muſt either not have forfeited his Innocence, or have recover'd it again by a ſincere Repentance. But alas! Is the number of this ſort of People very great? And are there many to be found, who do themſelves that perpetual Violence, without which they can never get to Heaven? Are there many to be met with, who have this Purity of Manners? Or who live in the continual Practice of Mortification and Pennance? Where is that horrour for Sin, that ardent Charity, which makes up a great part of the Character of the Elect? What is become of the Simplicity of the Primitive Chriſtians? In this Age all give way to intereſt. Religion it ſelf is made to ſerve particular deſigns; and Men ſuffer themſelves to be carried along with the Croud: Thus it is, they tell us, that Men in the World do now a Days Live, and a Man muſt be like other Men: Be it ſo then,

*March* and *Septemb.*

*March* and *Septemb.*

but yet a Man muſt not forget to be a Chriſtian; nor that to be Sav'd, it is neceſſary for him, to Live like a Chriſtian amongſt ſuch as are Chriſtians only in Name.

It is alſo an undoubted Truth, that the affair of our Salvation is, of all affairs, the moſt important; that our whole Life is given us for no other end, but to Labour in this great affair; that we muſt Labour in it all our Life long, without being able after all to be aſſur'd of ſucceſs. And are there many of theſe Zealous Chriſtians to be found, who look upon their Salvation as their moſt important and only affair?

Without the laſt Grace there is no Hope of Salvation; and yet it is an Article of Faith, that no Body can Merit this Grace; and that God may, without any Injuſtice, refuſe it to the greateſt Saints. Upon what ground then do we, who are ſuch Infidels, and ſo Luke-warm in the Service of God, build our hopes, and our aſſurance of this Grace?

Theſe are not Counſels, but the Laws and Maxims of JESUS CHRIST, the Foundation and the Rule of our Salvation: But it is not for knowing theſe Laws, but for keeping them, that a Man ſhall be Sav'd. The diſpenſing even with one of them is enuff to Damn a Man. Now let us conſider, we who know how Men in this Age do Live, whether the number of thoſe that are to be Sav'd, can be great; and alſo, whether we our ſelves have much reaſon

reaſon to Hope, that we ſhall be of this number.

*March* and *Septemb.*

How many, think you, of this great City will be Sav'd, ſays Saint *Chryſoſtom* to the Inhabitants of *Conſtantinople*? What I am going to ſay will frighten you, and yet notwithſtanding, I cannot forbear telling you, that, of ſo many thouſand Souls as now make up this great City, one of the Largeſt and beſt Peopl'd of the Univerſe, there will hardly be a hundred Sav'd; nay I very much doubt whether there will be ſo many.

The City of *Conſtantinople* was not at that time leſs Polite than Cities of Chriſtendom are at this Day: It was fill'd with honeſt, good People; and the Citizens had the reputation of being Devout; they frequented the Sacraments; and Liv'd after the ſame manner that Men now a Days do in the World. Let us judge by the opinion of a Saint, who, without a particular light, wou'd never have ſpoken ſo poſſitively; let us I ſay, judge by his Words, what the number of the Elect is like to be?

But to be ſincere what is all this for? Are we willing to impoſe upon, and blind our ſelves ſo far, as not to ſee, that we are Damning our ſelves irrecoverably? And do we not perceive, that even Religion it ſelf obliges us to Believe, that by Liveing, as the greateſt part of the World Liv's, we are actually Damning our ſelves? And it is certain, ſince we have ſuch Laws, and ſuch Maxims, if our Religion cou'd make

*March* and *Septemb.*

us Hope to be Sav'd, by leading a Life directly contrary to thoſe very Laws, and thoſe Maxims, we cou'd not in Reaſon Believe it a true, or a good Religion. This indeed wou'd be to impoſe upon all Mankind: But, thanks be to God, that kind of Conduct is expreſly Condemn'd by our Religion. And the number of Lazy, Sluggiſh Chriſtians will never Juſtifie the Follies and Irregularities of the Imperfect.

It is an Article of Faith, that no Body without reſembling JESUS CHRIST ſhall be Sav'd; that is to ſay, if he has not an Abhorrence for every thing which he Deteſted; and an Eſteem and Value for every thing which he Lov'd. But are there many to be found like this Model? Are we our ſelves like it? And what ſhall be our Fate if we do not reſemble it?

In this Age, if a Man do's but make ſome ſhew of Religion, and ſome little outward appearances of Vertue, he preſently frames for himſelf a Syſtem of Conſcience, under the Shelter of which he is at eaſe in the buſineſs of his Salvation; but are we to learn, that the Hereticks themſelves have theirs alſo, and are, tho' in a different manner greater obſervers of Ceremonies than we? And notwithſtanding this their behaviour, we Believe they are Damn'd, with all their pretended qualifications of honeſt Men. Ah! Let us ſincerely Examin upon what Revelation, what new Goſpel, do we build the pretended aſſurance we endeavour to have of our Salvation,

vation, we ſay we are in the right Religion, and they are not: But certainly if Men did not take Pleaſure in Deceiving themſelves in the matter of Salvation, they wou'd conſider which was better, either to Believe almoſt nothing of what they are bound to do, or to do almoſt nothing of what they do really Believe. *March* and *Septemb.*

If nothing more was neceſſary to be Sav'd, but to Believe; the number of the Predeſtinate wou'd not be ſmall: Let them but allow us to Live as we pleaſe, and we'll eaſily Believe all that they wou'd have us Believe. But alas, Faith without Works is Dead. Tho' Men flatter themſelves never ſo much with Believing as they ought, there is no Salvation to be hop'd for, if they do not Live up to what they do Believe. The Devils themſelves Believe better than we do; but their Beliefe is only Speculative, not Practical: Unhappy we, if we Believe but as the Devils do.

Is it poſſible, that all the great Holyneſs of Chriſtianity, all the Fruit of the Examples of a God-Man, all the Price of his Blood, all the effects of his Sacraments, and of his Grace, ſhou'd be reduc'd to the making us keep ſome few, I know not what Meaſures, which ſerve but to make us Periſh the more Securely, and with leſs Fear, by diſguiſing the Faults that are equally common to us and to the Heathens?

And what! Were the Saints Men of any other Nature or Condition than ours? Were

*March* and *Septemb.*

Were they excepted out of the General Redemption of Man-kind? Or were not the ways of Heaven found out till now? Did they pretend to any other Recompence than what is ſet before us? Whence then do's it proceed that we are ſo little like them? They were deſirous to be Saints; what do we deſire to be? Can or ought we to hope to be Saints, if we ſo little reſemble them?

God, ſay they, will have Mercy on us: But upon what can this Confidence be founded, by Men, who make uſe of it only to put off their Repentance and Converſion? JESUS CHRIST has Condemn'd in expreſs Words the Luke-warm Souls: And where is it now a Days that Luke-warmneſs do's not Reign?

Ah Lord! Shall I be perſwaded, that the number of thoſe who ſhall be Sav'd is Small; and ſhall I nevertheleſs, do almoſt nothing to be of this ſmall number? Ah my God, let him Periſh that will: As for me, altho' there was but one Man of the whole Univerſe to be Sav'd, knowing that I am capable of that Happineſs, I am reſolv'd it ſhall be my ſelf.

I well perceive, O my Saviour, that, hetherto, I have done nothing for you, that might be able to inſpire me with this Confidence; but give me leave to tell you, that ſeeing what you your ſelf do at this preſent for me, I know not how to be leſs Confident. Do you give me all this time, do you enable me to make all theſe

Reflections

Reflections, only to render me more Guilty? Muſt I needs wait for your ſhewing me other ſigns, than the ſaving fear you inſpire me with, of not being of the ſmall number of the Elect, to convince me, that you deſire I may be of it? *March and Septemb.*

I have made uſeleſs the good Thoughts which I have heretofore had: but, my God, I have, me thinks ſome Reaſon to Believe, that the Reſolution I have now taken, to Labour ſeriouſly in the buſineſs of my Salvation, will prove efficacious. I know theſe Thoughts paſs away, and that theſe Conſiderations Vaniſh: But, ſince I intend not to Delay my Converſion one Moment, but to Devote my ſelf intirely to your Service, I hope, ſtrengthen'd and Supported by your Grace, and Goodneſs, that this Reſolution will become effectual.

*Dixi, nunc cœpi, hæc mutatio dexteræ excelſi.*

THE

# THE SECOND MEDITATION. OF Sins.

## I. Point.

### *Of Mortal Sins.*

*March* and *Septemb.*

CONSIDER that all the Evils which have happen'd ſince the begining of the World, this inundation of misfortunes, which have over run the whole Earth; Wars, Plagues, Fires, Sickneſſes, and a thouſand other inconveniences, the Eternal Damnation of ſo many Souls, and even Hell it ſelf, have been the fatal conſequences of one Mortal Sin.

There were no more Perfect, nor more Noble Creatures than the Angels; and yet one ſingle Sin which was but a Thought of Vanity, and which laſted but a Moment,

a Moment, caſt down headlong into Hell and condemn'd to everlaſting Puniſhments, a vaſt number of thoſe noble and Perfect Creatures, who might otherwiſe have ſo much glorifi'd God for all Eternity, and whom he had made for his own particular Glory. Let us now therefore Conceive, if it be poſſible, what a dreadfull thing a Mortal Sin is. *March* and *Septemb.*

One ſingle Sin of Diſobedience depriv'd our fore-Father *Adam* of Original Juſtice, of all Gifts Natural and Supernatural, even of the Privilege of Immortality, and condemn'd him and his Poſterity, to an almoſt infinit multitude of all ſortes of Evils; which will make us, his unhappy Poſterity, ſigh and groan to the end of the World. Conſider that God has been taking vengeance for this Sin, theſe ſix thouſand Years, and yet his Anger is not appeas'd; it will laſt to the World's end, and the Fire of Hell which his Wrath has kindl'd, will continue for ever and ever.

Sin muſt needs be a very great Evil ſince God, who is Goodneſs it ſelf, and whoſe Mercies exceed all the Wonders of his Works, puniſhes, in ſo terrible a manner, one ſingle Mortal Sin. How many Perſons of ſingular Vertue, full of Merits and arriv'd to a ſublime degree of Sanctity, have been unhappily Damn'd for one only Mortal Sin?

Tho' a Man ſhou'd have Liv'd ſixty or eighty Years in the Exerciſe of a moſt rigorous Pennance, and practic'd the moſt heroic

*March* and *Septemb.*

heroic Vertues, or even have done Miracles, yet one ſingle Mortal Sin, wou'd in a Moment deſtroy and bring all that to nothing; diſgrace a Man in the ſight of God, and make him become the object of his Wrath and Vengeance.

What God do's, to revenge himſelf of a Sinner, may give us ſome Idea, or Notion, of the Heinouſneſs and Enormity of Sin: But nothing can make us better ſee how much God hates it, than what he himſelf has done to deſtroy it. His Incarnation, his Birth, his Life, his Paſſion and his Death, are Wonders that ſurpaſs our Underſtanding; and yet, to deſtroy Sin, it was neceſſary to work all theſe Wonders; all the Blood of a God made Man was requir'd to Redeem one Soul; and yet, after ſo dear a purchaſe, this God Damn's this very Soul for one Mortal Sin; of which the Eternal Fires of Hell can never take away the leaſt Stain.

That Men ſhou'd believe all this, and yet Sin on, and be able to Live one ſingle moment in Sin, and not fear to put themſelves every Day into the danger of Sinning; good God, how ſtrange and inconceivable a thing is this!

How is our Belief to be reconcil'd with our Conduct? Nay how is our Conduct to be reconcil'd even with our Reaſon? What do not Men Daily do, rather than diſoblige a Friend? And People, who are very Nice and Tender in the ſmaleſt Punctilios of Civility, make no Bones blindly

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to paſs over the principal Duties of a Chriſtian. It is not doubted, but that the greateſt part of the Evils, which we ſuffer, happen not, but for the Puniſhment of ſome Sin. We are convinc'd that Hell is a very terrible thing, and every Body has it in extream horrour; and yet they have not the leſt horrour for Sin, which alone is the cauſe of Hell. *March* and *Septemb.*

The leſt Evil makes us ſad, uneaſie and peeviſh, and ſometimes inconſolable: We Sin, and thereby loſe what all the Wealth of the Earth, infinitly multiply'd, cannot repair: We Sin; but are we inconſolable or even ſad for doing ſo?

Let us conſider that altho' we ſhou'd have committed in our whole Life but one ſingle Mortal Sin, yet we ſhou'd have good Reaſon to Lament, and be afraid even to Death it ſelf, we have Sin'd, we may Sin again, and we do not know that our Sins are Pardon'd; and yet, which is ſtrange, we are not at all afraid.

Which of us is at this hour ſure, that he is in the State of Grace? We have been often at Confeſſion; but who has told us that our Contrition was ſincere, that the Motive of our Grief was Supernatural, and after ſo many, and ſo frequent Relapſes, can we be ſatisfi'd with our former purpoſes of Sinning no more?

If God ſpar'd not the Angels; what ought we not to apprehend from his Juſtice? We, who have Sin'd after we ſaw the Angels ſo ſeverely Puniſh'd, after we ſaw a God

a God Dye upon the Croſs to Deſtroy Sin? Can we Believe that Sin in us is leſs a Sin, or leſs the object of the Wrath and Hatred of God?

*March* and *Septemb.*

Lord, thou haſt granted me one Favour, which thou haſt not granted to the Angels; that of Dying for me: Grant me alſo, by the Merits of thy Death, the Grace thou haſt refus'd to them, that is to ſay, a full and Perfect grief and ſorrow for all my Sins, and ſince thou do'ſt yet give me time to Repent, which is what thou haſt not granted to many others, give me alſo the Will to begin it from this Moment.

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# II. Point.

## *Of Venial Sins.*

CONSIDER that a Venial Sin ſeems not a ſmall thing but to ſuch as have little Faith, and leſs Love for God: But, to ſuch as Love him, the leaſt Sin appears more dreadful than all the greateſt Evils in the World. A Venial Sin, is a little Sin, but it is not a little Evil; and it's being a Sin, is ſufficient to make it a greater Evil, than the Deſtruction of Man-kind, and the Ruin of all Creatures; and all Men, according to the Opinion

Opinion of the Saints, ought to eſteem themſelves happy, in having the opportunity of Sacrificing their Lives, to hinder one ſingle Venial Sin. *March* and *Septemb.*

The diſtruſt, which *Moyſes* ſhow'd by ſtriking the Rock twice, coſt him his Life; five and twenty thouſand *Bethſamits*, for having look'd at the Ark with a little too much curioſity, fell Dead upon the Place; a little Vanity, which *David* had of numbering his People, brought upon him, and upon that People, the moſt terrible of all God's Scourges; two and forty young Children were Devour'd by Bears, for mocking *Elias*; and *Heſykias's* vain Compleaſance, in ſhowing his Treaſures to the King of *Babilon's* Embaſſadors, cou'd not be expiated, but by the loſs of thoſe very Treaſures.

Do's not God judge righily of things? And yet thus it is, that he puniſhes a Venial Sin in this World: For in the other, where his Juſtice is not moderated by his Mercy, for one ſingle venial Sin, he Torments by pains, full as Violent as thoſe of Hell, Souls, which he tenderly Loves, and which only Love him.

We ſhall one Day know, that the Death of an only Son, the loſs of Health and Wealth, the ruin of a Family, thoſe Scourges which make Deſolate a part of the Earth, are perhaps, ſent now, as formerly they were, for the Puniſhment of Venial Sins. And if God do's not always Puniſh Sin in ſo ſenſible a manner, it is

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but to Puniſh it hereafter, with more Severity.

*March* and *Septemb.*

There is not a Venial Sin, deliberatly committed, which is not puniſh'd by the withdrawing of ſome Grace or Favour, and can that be call'd a ſmall Chaſtiſement? A Venial Sin do's not draw upon us God's hatred; but it cooles his Love, ſtops his Bounties, hinders his Graces, and ſuſpends that particular Providence, which he has over his Favorits, and the ſpecial care, which he takes to remove them from dangers, and to hinder, or weaken their Temptations. There is not any State more dangerous for Salvation, than the State of Luke-warmneſs: This unhappy State is always the effect of Venial Sin; which makes a Soul languiſh, and loſe inſenſibly, the guſt or reliſh of Piety. God is weary of bearing with an ungratful Perſon who believes he acquits himſelf ſufficiently, of the infinit obligations he has to him, by avoiding to put on him the laſt outrage or affront; altho' he do's him, every Day, in cold Blood, a thouſand little Diſpleaſures.

Which of us cou'd reſolve to keep a Servant long, who is indeed Faithful, but excepting that, has all other kind of Faults; who do's nothing but Imperfectly, and all things with a very ill Grace; who always ſpeaks without Reſpect; and takes very little pains not to diſpleaſe us, upon pretence that it is but a Trivial matter? And ſhall we perſwade our ſelves, that God will keep long

long ſuch a Servant as we our ſelves wou'd not keep. It is true that a Venial Sin do's not make a Man an Enemy to God; but it is alſo true, that a Man, who, of ſet purpoſe, commits many Venial Sins, do's not Love God. *March* and *Septemb.*

There is nothing more certain than that a Perſon, who contents himſelf with barely preferring God's Friendſhip, ſets no great value upon it. All that can be ſaid of it is, that he is indeed afraid of haveing God for his Enemy, but will take no pains to have him for his Friend: What a ſtrange way is it, of improving a Man's Friendſhip with a Perſon, to diſoblige him ſeriouſly, and of ſet purpoſe on all occaſions? And in good earneſt, how can theſe two terms be reconcil'd; to profeſs to Love God, and yet to diſpleaſe him?

But it is but in trivial and light things. So much the eaſier it is not to diſpleaſe him; ſo much the more blamable and inexcuſable are we for diſpleaſing him. Is it in a ſmall matter? It was not then the difficulty, that diſcourag'd us, nor the Violence of Paſſion, that did as it were force and drag us along: It was nothing therefore perhaps but an extream indifference which we had for God, whom we neither Serve nor Love but for Fear; or rather whom we flatter our ſelves we Love becauſe we are afraid of his Chaſtiſements.

We muſt not therefore be ſurpris'd, if God has but an indifference, nay even an abhorrence

*March* and *Septemb.*

abhorrence for People that treat him ſo unworthily. He has no longer any Communication with Luke-warm Souls, nor grants them any particular Favours; and to ſpeak truth, why ſhou'd ſuch unfaithful Souls, deſerve any eſpecial Graces, which are the Rewards of the greateſt and moſt fervent Devotion? Thence it proceeds that they are continually in danger of committing great Faults; and it is certain that the Habit of Venial Sins Do's lead Men directly to the committing of Mortal Sins; God is in a manner oblig'd to deprive them of thoſe clear Lights, thoſe ſtrong Graces, without which they will never reſiſt violent and preſſing Temptations: Thence comes the ſurprizing Falls of ſo many Perſons, who in the begining were very cautious and reſerv'd: For having at firſt given themſelves ſome inordinate Liberty; they were at laſt given up and abandon'd to commit Diſorders, of which for a long time they cou'd not think without horrour. *He that Deſpiſes ſmall things, will fall by little and little:* A Venial Sin never Becomes a Mortal Sin, but it diſpoſes one for it, and a Man ſoon loſes Grace when once he comes to think it is ſufficient not to loſe it. We are ſurpris'd at this heinous fall; but we ſhou'd be leſs if we knew what a Diſpoſition Venial Sin had put that Soul into. Venial Sin has juſt the ſame relation to Mortal, as Diſeaſes have to Death: It was but a ſlight indiſpoſition; ſuch little Sickneſſes are eaſily cur'd: But yet

yet they do ſo inſenſibly weaken Health, that a ſmall Exceſs, an ill Air, is enuff, to beget a malignant Feavour, which quickly carries a Man to his Grave. A Man in Health may Dye ſuddenly, but this ſeldom happens: And the moſt ſudden Deaths have been preceeded by many ſmall Indiſpoſitions, but ſuch as Men made no account of: A great many Venial Sins, even diliberately committed do not Kill the Soul; but yet they weaken and put it in ſo languiſhing a Condition, that a Man do's his Duty but by halves, and without any Pleaſure; he is Sick, every thing do's him harm and nothing do's him good; Prayers, Sacraments, and good Works, all are Fruitleſs, and Ineffectual. Can a Soul in this State preſerve Grace long, expos'd as it is to ſo many Dangers of loſing it, and even not fearing to expoſe it ſelf to theſe Dangers? *March* and *Septemb.*

This made a great Saint ſay, that ſometimes a Man ought take leſs care to fly from great Sins, than to avoid ſmall ones. This it is which makes great Saints inconſolable for the ſmalleſt Faults. And hence it is, that they are afraid of being depriv'd by theſe Infidelities of ſome certain important Graces, without which they will never reſiſt more preſſing Temptations. After all this, can Venial Sin be ſayd to be nothing, or of no conſequence? What ſhall then be ſome thing, what of conſequence, if it be nothing to offend God? Ah, what! Not to diſoblige this Friend,

*March and Septemb.*

or that Relation, ſeems to us a matter of great conſequence; and it is ſomething, in the opinion of all, to diſpleaſe a Man even tho' by inadvertence: And ſhall it be nothing to diſpleaſe God wilfully? Shall it be nothing to leſſen his Friendſhip towards us? Nothing to ſtop the courſe of his Graces, to make the Sacraments uſeleſs, to extinguiſh the Fervor of Charity? And whilſt an inconſiderate, haſty Word is reckon'd among Men, becauſe of it's conſequence, a great Evil; ſhall an Action that offends God, be eſteem'd but a ſmall Evil? An Action, which draws upon us, not indeed his Hatred, but, at leaſt, his indifference; which makes us loſe more Precious Wealth, than all the Treaſures of the Univerſe; that diſpoſes ſo much to Mortal Sin, and which is often the ſad cauſe of Reprobation, even to Perſons who at firſt appear'd very circumſpect and regular?

Let us conſider what diſpoſition we are in with reſerrence to Venial Sins. Let us above all things examin whether we have had in all our Confeſſions a true purpoſe to amend our ſelves in this particular; for it is to be fear'd, that ſuch as ſo often Confeſs the ſame Venial Sins, do make Confeſſions which at leaſt are uſeleſs, for want of Contrition. In the mean time Men make ſmall account of this matter; and yet I do not know, that there are many things we ought to be more afraid of then of this; let us Examin, and at the ſame time let us carefully regulate our Conduct and Behaviour in this Point.

THE

# THE THIRD MEDITATION.

*March* and *Septemb.*

UPON

## The thoughts which we ſhall have at the hour of Death.

See the Third Meditation of the Month of *January* and *July*. Page. 67.

# THE FIRST MEDITATION. THAT A Man ought not to delay his Converſion.

## I. Point.

*To put off on's Converſion is to run the danger of not being Converted at all.*

*April* and *October.*

CONSIDER that there is no Body who has not had ſometimes in his Life a deſire to be perfectly Converted to God. There are ſome certain happy Moments wherein by the favour of ſome inward Light Men diſcover all of a ſudden ſo many Faults and Imperfections in all Creatures, and find ſo little Solidity in any Created Being, and ſo great a diſguſt in all the things which charm'd them moſt, that they cannot

not but own it is down right Madneſs, not to ſerve God. Men have too much Senſe not to yield to Reaſon; but Men have not generoſity enuff to reſiſt their Paſſions. Self-Love finds a temperament for both; it ſatisfies Reaſon by making us conclude that our Converſion is neceſſary, and yet leaving us in the mean time to our former Habits; it complies with our Sluggiſhneſs, by making us delay our Converſion; but it is very viſible, that it do's deceive us, ſince this Delay put's us into an evident danger of being never Converted. *April* and *October.*

To be Converted, a Man muſt have the Time, the Will and the Grace; altho' we ſhou'd delay our Converſion but for one Day, who has told us that we ſhall enjoy that pretended Day of Converſion? Who has told us, altho' we ſhou'd Live to that Day, that we ſhall then have a better Will to it than we have now? And by what Revelation are we aſſur'd of haveing a more efficacious Grace, than any of thoſe which we have hitherto reſiſted?

What is more uncertain than Time? An infinity of People have been ſurpriz'd by Death, but the very Evening before their Converſion. What a grievous thing is it to Dye with a Project of a future Converſion? We commonly ſay it is not yet Time to break off this Sinful habit, to withdraw our ſelves from the occaſion of Sining, to reform our Manners, and to lead a more Retir'd and a more Chriſtian Life. Alas! When will it be time! Our Converſion.

*April* and *October.*

ſion muſt be delay'd till the heat of our Youth be over, till Age and Experience ſhall have Diſabus'd and Wean'd us from our little triffling Fooleries, which now wholly poſſeſs us; till then when every thing ſhall conſpire to Convert us.

'Tis after this manner that almoſt all Men reaſon upon the deſign of their Converſion; for no Body intends to Dye unconverted: But do they reaſon well? And are there many of theſe kind of Men Converted when they Dye? It is true, ſays Saint *Auguſtin*, that the Repentance of thoſe, who defer their Converſion to the laſt extremity is Receiv'd; but, to ſpeak ſincerely, I do not Believe, that any great ſtreſs is to be laid on ſuch ſort of Converſions; no add's he, not to Deceive you, I do not Believe there is.

We have not hetherto been willing to Convert our ſelves heartily and in good earneſt: What reaſon have we to Believe, that we ſhall then have a more real and effectual Deſire to do it? We have hetherto met with Obſtacles; are we to learn that the Obſtacles encreaſe with our Paſſions, and our Paſſions with our Years? The amuſements of Youth have hetherto hinder'd you; beſides you may Repent, you'll tell me, at any time: But who has told you, that you will be at all times in a Condition to Repent, and be Converted? We refus'd to do it, when God ſolicited us to it, when the obſtacles were leſs ſtrong, and the habits more weak; can we reaſonably

reaſonably Hope, that we ſhall do it, when the Obſtacles are multiply'd, our Habits grown old and ſtubborn, and God tired out by our reſiſtance to his Grace? He will ſolicit us no more, but very Faintly: It is not at all probable; on the contrary it is very certain by experience that Men hazard their all, by delaying their Converſion in this manner; and yet Alas! We are not afraid, after the Example of many others to run the ſame Riske. *April* and *October.*

Was there ever any Criminal who upon the point of Receiving his Pardon, Pray'd the Prince to defer it to another time? God offers us his Friend-ſhip, and makes preſent of his Grace, and we are not pleas'd to Receive it now: We pray him to wait till we are in humour to accept it and make a ſuitable return: He ſolicits us in Vain; we pretend that he may preſerve his Friend-ſhip for us till another time; but wou'd we our ſelves deal thus by the vileſt of Men? And how wou'd we bear with a Man, who ſhou'd treat us in this manner?

Every Body reckons he ſhall have time to Repent: If CHRIST JESUS had Promis'd us with an Oath, that we ſhou'd have notice of the time of his coming, we cou'd not Live in greater ſecurity than we do, altho' we know full well that he has Sworn the clear contrary.

Was there ever ſeen a Merchant, who, finding himſelf in a ſtate of reparing his loſſes, not in the humour to make uſe of

*April* and *October.*

the occaſion, but deſirous to defer it, even but for one Day? Or did every any Man, dangerouſly Sick, think of Praying his Phyſician to put of his viſits for ſome Days? And yet, to be ſincere; are we, who pretend to be ſo Wiſe, but even reaſonable in deſiring to delay, even for one Day, our perfect Converſion? We are perhaps in Diſgrace with God, and perceive that the beſt and moſt ſaving Remedies have no effect, that the Diſeaſe increaſes; God preſſes and ſolicits us earneſtly, and deſires nothing but our own Conſent to reſtore health to our Souls, and yet we are not pleas'd, or willing to be Cur'd.

Did not the Son of God foreſee all our excuſes, and all the falſe pretences of our delays, when he aſſur'd us, in expreſs terms, that he wou'd come when we did not expect him? This is not the bare Advice of a very Wiſe and Underſtanding Friend: He that ſpeaks, is Maſter both of Life and Death, and cannot be ignorant of the time he has reſolv'd to take us out of this World. Let us make the beſt projects poſſible, our reaſonings will never be able to prevail againſt his Word; it is an Article of Faith, that we ſhall Dye at a time when we do not think we ſhall. We never ſaw any one Dye, nor were ever dangerouſly Sick, that we did not reſolve to turn and repent; and notwithſtanding we have not yet put our Reſolution into Practice; and if at our laſt Sickneſs we ſhou'd be ſtill in the ſame Reſolution, what reaſon cou'd we have

have to Believe, that God wou'd then accept theſe our pretended Reſolutions?

*April* and *October.*

All the World trembles, if their Life, or their Fortune be but in Danger; and yet ſhall it be nothing, to be in danger of loſing their Souls by not Repenting: And if it be ſo ſmall a thing to loſe one's Soul, how comes it to paſs, my Saviour, that thou haſt been at ſo great expence to purchaſe it's Salvation?

My God thou do'ſt not deſire the Death of a Sinner, but on the contrary that he ſhou'd Repent and Live: It is therefore my Fault only if I do not Turn and Repent. But why do I not Repent? Is it that I do not deſire? No, no, I deſire it; and yet how can I ſay I do deſire it, when I am ſtill content from Day to Day to put off my Converſion? Might not one ſay that it is but an ill thing to be wholly God's; ſince Men will not begin, but as late as poſſible to go to him? We quake and tremble at the ſight of the leaſt danger; but was there ever a greater danger, than that of Eternal Damnation? But there's an end on't, Lord; I can no longer delay; and yet how good ſoever my Will be, it muſt be wholly thy own Work: Convert me therefore Lord, and I ſhall be truly Converted.

*Converte nos & Convertemur.*

## II. Point.

### *For a Man to delay his Converſion is to put himſelf into a kind of neceſſity never to be Converted.*

*April* and *October.*

CONSIDER that the delay of our Converſion do's not only endanger our not being Converted, but alſo put's us under a kind of neceſſity of never being Converted. The Scripture Exhort's us to ſeek God whilſt he may be found; whence it follow's, that there is a time when he may be ſought, and not found: And what ought a Man to expect, whom God has for ſeveral Years ſollicited in vain, and for whom he has not had atractives enough to win?

We are yet too Young to be Devout; we muſt be Ouider before we begin to Repent and be Pious; that is to ſay, we have not yet ſufficiently offended God, we muſt let the Benefits which we receive from him encreaſe with our Days, and by our Infidelity and Diſobedience, puſh on our Ingratitude to a higher Point, and then we will in good earneſt begin to Serve him; but will God then accept of our Service? It is true, that as often as a Sinner ſhall

Repent

Repent and Return, he will find God ready to Receive him; but the difficulty is to Repent; and if a Man be not now willing to Repent and Return to God, what probability is there that he ſhall be hereafter more ſincerely willing, when it ſeems unreaſonable to expect, that God after ſo many Affronts and ſo much Patience, ſhou'd be really deſign'd that he ſhou'd Repent? *April* and *October.*

If the Apoſtles had delay'd, but for one Day, quitting all things, and following JESUS CHRIST, when he call'd them; cou'd they reaſonably have hop'd to be invited a ſecond time? Or in that caſe, to have had more Courage to follow him than they had at firſt? The great Man Invited his Gueſts but once to the Feaſt which he had prepar'd for them; and they alſo excus'd themſelves but once; and notwithſtanding that their excuſes ſeem'd reaſonable, yet they were enuff to hinder them from being any more Invited, nay even to make them be quite Rejected.

We pretend to have invincible obſtacles to hinder us now, but it is certain that we ſhall every Day have more and more. We ſay we cannot now Repent and grow better; but a while hence we ſhall be leſs able to do it: Spiritual Lectures, Meditations upon the moſt terrible Truths of the Goſpel, the Advertiſements of a Wiſe Directour, and even the frequenting of the Sacraments, have herherto had no effect upon us: Upon what then do we build the Hopes of this pretended future Converſion?

*April* and *October.*

We did not comply at the begining when we were touch'd with thoſe great Truths, and ſhall we then do it, when we ſhou'd become harden'd and inſenſible?

After a certain time a Man becomes accuſtom'd to any thing: The beſt Advice, the moſt Dreadfull Truths, make no longer any Impreſſion on the Mind, and much leſs on the Heart: It is in this caſe juſt as it is with thoſe who aſſiſt Dying Perſons: At firſt they are ſomewhat frighten'd; but after a while theſe ſad Objects move 'em not. We are at firſt ſtarted at the Thoughts of Hell; but, by thinking much of it, we get a cuſtom of not fearing it: we pretend we ſhall hereafter be diſabus'd and free'd, from what we are at preſent Charm'd with; alas! We are at this Moment ſufficiently convinc'd of our danger; for if we were truly ſatisfied with the State we are in, why ſhou'd we have a deſign now, of Repenting ſometime hereafter?

But let us even ſuppoſe that a longer experience will perfectly diſabuſe us: We ſhall not then purſue theſe falſe Pleaſures, this fooliſh Libertiniſme, out of an eſteem; but out of Intereſt, Cuſtom, Obſtinacy and Inclination: We ſhall then have got the unhappy Reputation of being extravagant, indevout, Libertins, and of living according to the Maxims of the World: In good truth, if we did not delight in deceiving ourſelves, we cou'd not hope, to have courage enuff to Conquer altogether and at

once

once a hundred ſeveral Obſtacles; we, who with fewer Sins and more Grace than we ſhall then have, have not yet been able to overcome one ſingle Obſtacle. *April* and *October.*

At leaſt, ſay they, a Man ſhall have an hour to Dye in, when at the ſight of his Danger he cannot fail to Repent: This it is that every one builds upon: But dare Men reckon upon a Converſion, or Repentance, made upon the ſight of Danger, and by conſequence proceeding wholly from Fear?

It is a plain ſign of the little ſincerity there is in theſe kind of Converſions, that of all theſe pretended Converts, who recover from a great fit of Sickneſs, there are very few found to be really and indeed Converted; beſides 'tis an Article of of Faith, that the Son of Man will come at a time, when he is leaſt expected; and tho' Men do not Dye ſuddainly, yet the hour of moſt Peoples Death is unforeſeen: Has not JESUS CHRIST himſelf aſſur'd us with an Oath, that at the Death of a Man, who ſhall have waited for his laſt hour to Return and Repent in, he will be inflexible? And if the Son of God had not a deſign to deceive us, or was not himſelf deceiv'd, the leaſt that a Sinner can expect, who puts off his Repentance to the hour of his Death, is to Dye in his Sin. JESUS CHRIST has not ſayd that we ſhall continue Obſtinate to the End, that we ſhall delay begging his Pardon, or that we ſhall not have time to do it: But I foretell you,

*April* and *October.*

you, ſays he, that you ſhall not have time to Repent, and that you ſhall Dye juſt as you have Liv'd. One muſt, they tell us, always Hope well; yes without doubt: But can that Hope be good which is contrary to Faith?

The Merits of JESUS CHRIST will Save us; that indeed might very well be, if his Word, his Goſpel, had not already condemn'd us: Is it in good truth reaſonable to think, that a Man cou'd end happily, in a few hours, the great affair of Eternal Salvation, which is the affair of our whole Life; and for which CHRIST himſelf has judg'd, that one cannot have leſs time than his whole Life, to compaſs it? And yet we ſhall hope to do it with ſucceſs in the laſt Moments: Shall we after this believe, that deferring from Day to Day our Converſion, it will yet be eaſie for us to Repent, even whilſt, by delaying it, we put our ſelves under a kind of neceſſity never to Repent? Can any thing be Hop'd for in the matter of Eternity, but upon a Solid Foundation; upon the very Word of God? And yet notwithſtanding we preſume to Hope, even againſt what this very Word has told us.

How long have we been ſolicited by the Grace of God to Turn and Repent? And yet how long have we reſiſted this Grace? Altho' we had no other Motive but the aſſurance we have, that God do's now offer us his Grace, that he is at this Moment ready to Receive us, that it is only

our

our own fault, if we be not at this preſent, what we wou'd deſire to be at the hour of Death, and what we ſhall be then almoſt in Deſpair for not being; it wou'd ſurely be enuff, and more cou'd not be deſir'd, to determine us to an immediate Converſion and Repentance. *April* and *October.*

If one of the Damn'd had the time, or the thought and the means which I have to Convert my ſelf, wou'd he, think you, delay it but for one Moment? They were what I am; have I not reaſon to fear becoming one Day what they are now? They have as I have done, delay'd their Repentance, and are Damn'd for no other reaſon but for delaying it: Is there not then the ſame reaſon for me to fear being Damn'd, as they were, for delaying my Repentance and Converſion?

It is very ſtrange that any Men ſhou'd be found to delay their Converſion till they come to Dye; that is to ſay, that they ſhou'd put off, the moſt important of all Affairs, to a time, wherein they are incapable of any affair, and wherein a Man wou'd be look'd upon as Mad and Senſeleſs, or at leaſt as imprudent that ſhou'd come to ſpeak to us of any buſineſs. Oh! What, wou'd they ſay, is this Sick, this Dying Man, in a condition to think of the leaſt buſineſs? And yet notwithſtanding it is to this time, ſo improper for the leaſt affairs, that Men defer the moſt important of all affairs, the buſineſs of Salvation, the buſineſs of Eternity.

*April* and *October.*

It is very ſurpriſing, that any Body ſhou'd think of Converting himſelf ſome time or other, and yet ſhou'd delay his Converſion even but for one ſingle Day. For to think of Converting one's ſelf ſome time or other, is to own he knows, that in the State he is in, his Salvation is in danger; that he do's not Love God, that he Serves him not, that he has perhaps the misfortune to be in his Diſgrace; in a word, that he wou'd not willingly Dye in the State he is in. And yet what is this delaying to Convert himſelf, but a being willing to Live in the Danger, wherein every Day ſo many Periſh? But a refuſing to Love God, and being content to continue ſtill in his Diſgrace? But being willing to Live in a State, wherein he knows ful well he wou'd not deſire to Dye? And that too after he had well thought on't, and after he had deſign'd more than once to change his Life? Laſtly, but to be willing to continue at enmity with God, even at the very time when he offers us his Grace, and preſſes us to return and embrace his Friendſhip? Can any Rational or Chriſtian Man make this Reflection, and delay even for one Moment his Converſion? Alas! My Saviour, I can: And this Reflection, and a hundred more, will be uſeleſs to me, if thou thy ſelf, Lord, wil't not Convert me. Grant therefore, O my God, through thy Mercies grant, that this may be the Day of my perfect Converſion, ſince it is the Day on which I have fully reſolv'd to return to thee and Repent.

THE

# THE SECOND MEDITATION. OF The good uſe of our Time.

## I. Point.

### *Of the Preciouſneſs of Time.*

REMEMBER that there is nothing more Precious then Time, all it's Moments are worth an Eternity: An Everlaſting Happineſs, the Glory of the Bleſt, the Price of the Blood of JESUS, all this is but the Recompence of our making a good uſe of time: Time is ſo Precious a thing, that all the Honour, and all the Wealth of the World, are not worth ſo much as one of it's Moments; and altho' we ſhou'd have employ'd but one Moment in acquiring all the

*April* and *October.*

*April* and *October.*

the Riches of the World, if we have not got ſomething better in the ſight of God, who makes a right Judgment of things, it is to have miſpent our time; and there is not a Damn'd Soul, which wou'd not have given all the Kingdoms, and all the Wealth of the World, if in his Power, for one Moment of the time he has loſt in trifles, and which we our ſelves, as he did, do Daily loſe for toyes and vanities.

Let us conceive, if it be poſſible, what a Grace is, and how much the enjoyment of a God is worth; this Grace, and this God, are the price of Time, Time is given us for no other end, but to grow every moment more and more in Grace, but to Merit by the aſſiſtance of Grace, the poſſeſſion of God; and we can truly ſay, that we have loſt, in every moment which we have not employ'd for God, more than the whole World is worth.

What the Saints in Heaven can never do, by the moſt perfect Acts of the greateſt Vertues, which is to merit a new degree of Glory, that I can do by one ſingle Act of the Love of God, at every moment of my Time: What the Reprobate can never do, by their Tears, by their Sorrows, and by all the moſt terrible Puniſhments poſſible, which is to aſſwage the Wrath of God and obtain Pardon for their Crimes, that, I can do every moment, by one Sigh, by one Tear; I can at any time, by one ſingle Act of Contrition, obtain Pardon for all my Sins.

A happy

A happy or an unhappy Eternity depends upon the good or ill uſe we make of Time: Our Salvation is not to be wrought but in Time; and yet there are People who know not what to do with it, who amuſe and buſie themſelves about trifles to paſs away the Time: You know not what to do with it: Ah, what; have you never offended God? Have you no obligation to him? Have you receiv'd no Benefits from him? And ought you not to pay him ſome Homage? All Eternity ſeems not long enuff for the Saints to Love him, to Bleſs Honour and Thank him, and yet one half Day, nay one hour of our Time, ſeems too long for us. *April* and *October.*

You know not how to ſpend your Time: What, do you not know how to grieve and be ſorry for having Offended God? And ſince you know that JESUS CHRIST dwels upon your Altars, that he there expects your Homage; that the Churches are not ſo crowded with Adorers, but that there is ſtill room enuff for you to get in and make one; can you then ſay you know not how to employ your Time? But obſerve that when we have moſt leaſure to Love God, and to Honour him, then it is that we ſay, we know not how to ſpend our Time: For when Men are continually taken up with the affairs of the World, or paſs away whole Days in Vain Divertiſments, when they are imploy'd in offending God, and deſtroying their Souls, they are never weary, nor think they have Time enuff.

Let

*April* and *October.* Let us consider that we cannot work out our Salvation but in Time; and that the whole Time of our Lives is given us for no other end but this: With what care then ought we manage it, since all it's moments are so precious, and that we cannot have a greater loss, than the loss of our Time; upon which Eternity depends? And yet do we find that we are much concern'd for this loss? Or do we even look upon the ill usage of Time, as any loss at all; since for an affair of little or no importance, we let no moment slip; or if we do, are inconsolable for it; and let us be never so assidious and diligent about it, we are still afraid we shall not have Time enuff?

Alas, alas! A Time will come when judging of things more justly, we shall have far different thoughts then what we have at present: Then we shall lament the many fair Days and Hours, which we have misemploy'd and spent so ill; there will a Time come when we wou'd give the World, to have again some of those Precious moments, which we now prodigally throw away; which we lose, and which we are desirous to lose: Then, then, we shall be in Despair to see, that the Time is past, and all the moments lost.

Ah! If I were at present, we shall all say after our Deaths, what I was on such or such a Day of my Life; when I was Meditating of the good usage of Time, if I had now the same Health and the same Age! My God what wou'd I not do?

But

But unhappy that I am, why then thinking of the Regret I ſhall one Day come to have, for not having made an advantage of the Time that was lent me; why did I not make an advantage then, both of that Thought and of that Time? *April and October.*

Time is ſhort, becauſe it laſts but one's Life: I have perhaps already paſt over more then half my Life; and what uſe have I made of this Time? How have I ſpent the laſt Year? It is but time loſt to have done what I ought not to do, and not to have done what I was oblig'd to do. O my God! What account ſhall I have to give, and above all of the Reflections which I at preſent make?

But ought I to expect any Mercy, if I do not hereafter make a better uſe of Time, or if I defer any longer my Converſion? How many People are now well, that ſhall not be alive at the end of the Year; and how many have we known that are now Dead, who at the begining of this Year were in better health then we? And who has aſſur'd us, that we our ſelves ſhall ſee it end?

For which reaſon let us do good whilſt we have time; we have but a little Time to Live, let us therefore not defer for one moment our Perfect Converſion.

## II. Point.

*April* and *October.*

## II. Point.

### *The loſs of Time is irreparable.*

CONSIDER that the loſs of Time is an irreparable loſs; that is to ſay, let Men do all they can, they will never be able to recover one loſt Moment: To Men capable of Reflection, and ſuch as deſire to be Sav'd, there needs no more to make 'em ſee, of what importance the good uſage of time is.

It is certain, that all the moments of our Life are counted; whether we employ theſe precious moments well or ill, we ſhall not make the number greater; the number is determin'd, and decreaſes every Minute; an hour ago we had more Time to Live, and conſequently to Labour in the buſineſs of our Salvation, and within an hour we ſhall yet have leſs.

Tho' hereafter we lead as Holy a Life as Saint *Paul*, tho' we loſe not one moment more of the remainder of our Time: It is ſtill true, that time already loſt will never be retriev'd; and that all the moments of our Lives, which have been ill employ'd, are irrecoverably loſt; the well employing of our Time to come may likely draw us out of the danger into which we had before precipitated our ſelves by miſpending

miſpending our Time paſt; but it cannot reſtore the Time we have loſt, nor prevent our loſing by that loſs, all the Graces, which God deſign'd us, and all the Good, which in that Time we might have done. *April* and *October.*

O God! What a loſs? Let us count if it be poſſible how much Time we have loſt, from the moment we firſt came to the uſe of Reaſon to this very Day; what Graces have been loſt together with this very Time; which we can never more Recover?

We paſs away the time; ſo we ſay of the time, which we throw away upon trifles and vain amuſements: My God! How ill do's this ſaying, we paſs away the Time, become a Chriſtian: The Time indeed paſſes; but the Time paſt and loſt will never return again, no more, than the Grace, which I might have Merited in that Time.

There are ſome certain moments to which the Grace of Predeſtination is in ſome manner faſten'd: Ah! What wou'd become of us, if God had faſten'd to ſome of the moments we have loſt, the Grace of our Predeſtination? It is true, that the ſaving Fear I have, of having loſt this Grace; is one of the moſt ſure, and moſt ſenſible ſigns that I have not loſt it. But what ought I to expect, if I reap no advantage by theſe Thoughts of mine, nor lay any hold of this preſent moment? Time is very ſhort, and very precious, and yet we long for nothing more, than to ſee Time paſs

*April* and *October.*

paſs away; we are no ſooner come to one Seaſon, than we preſently deſire to come to another. Whence proceeds this Uneaſineſs? Is it that we Live too long? Or that we are weary of Living? No certainly; but it is, that we make an ill uſe of our Time; it is properly this loſs, which we ſee, and which we feel, which makes us ſo reſtleſs and unquiet, and think the Time ſo long. No Pleaſures or Divertiſments can free us from this Diſquiet: It always accompanies us when ever we loſe our Time, and is never felt or experienc'd by ſuch as ſpend their Time well; nothing is more Compos'd and Calm, than a Soul which loſes no Time; but employs it all in the affair of it's Salvation. There have been ſome Saints, who have wiſh'd with Saint *Paul*, to be free'd from this Exile, that they might enjoy God Perfectly and without any Fear of loſing him: But have there ever been any ſeen, who exerciſing themſelves in good Works and applying themſelves to do what God Requir'd of them, were ſenſible of any ſuch Uneaſineſs and Diſquiets, or wiſh'd for a Change? A moſt convincing proof, that a Man needs but make a good uſe of his Time by doing the Will of God, to be fully Satisfied and Content. Let us here Conſider what uſe we have made of our Time paſt. It is gon, and if it be loſt, how great, alas! Is our loſs? And what means is there left to Repare it? What fair Days, what good Hours, and what

what moments in thoſe Days have we loſt? If we had employ'd all this Time well, what a ſweet Conſolation ſhou'd we feel? But what Regret for having loſt all this Time? And what Fear at the very thought alone of the exact account which we muſt one Day give of it? *April* and *October.*

Let us at leaſt make an advantage of the remainder of our Time; the courſe of our Life is determin'd, and we come nearer and nearer every moment to our End. Let us remember that a Time will come, when we can reap no more Benefit by Time, becauſe it will be ſwallow'd up in Eternity. Let us make a good uſe of the little Time we have yet to come, and for the future let us not loſe another Moment. Et tempus non erit amplius.

*April* and *October.*

# THE THIRD MEDITATION.

UPON

## The thoughts which we ſhall have at the hour of Death.

See the Third Meditation of the Month of *January* and *July*. Page. 67.

# THE FIRST MEDITATION.

## OF

## The defect of ſincerity in the will of the greateſt part of Chriſtians to work out their Salvation.

## I. Point.

*To be ſincerely willing to Labour in the Work of Salvation a Man muſt take the means for it.*

CONSIDER that there is no Body who do's not pretend to have a will to Labour in the buſineſs of his Salvation, but that there are very few in whom this will is found to be ſincere: There is no Sinner ſo hard-

*May* and *Novemb.*

*May* and *Novemb.*

en'd, who will not say at some time or other of his Life, that he desires to Return and Repent; no Religious Person so sluggish and lazy, who do's not believe himself in some manner willing to attain Perfection, because there can be no Man so Senseless, or so much an Enemy to himself; as to be willing to Destroy himself: And yet every one knows, that to be unwilling to Repent, is to be willing to Destroy himself.

But when a Man go's no further, but stops there, and content's himself with saying, he is willing, without taking the means for it, he has at most, but the Thought, and not at all the Will, to Repent: It is not hard for a Man, who has never so little Faith or Reason, to have a horrour for the Flames of Hell: The great Truths of our Religion frighten us into it, and all Men are convinc'd of it: Hereupon they presently fancy they are Converted, because they are perswaded they ought to be so.

A little Education, and a little Wit, will serve to make a Man abhor Vice and esteem Vertue; but it is very visible, that these Thoughts proceed more from his understanding than from his will; and it is to be fear'd, if his will have some little aversion for Ill, and some little Love for Good, that this aversion is but a bare Disgust of the sad consequences of Vice; and the Love, but a faint Compleasance for Good, without any effectual desire of his Salvation.

A Man

A Man deceives himſelf if he thinks this ſufficient; we ſhall not be judg'd upon the good Thoughts we have had, but upon the good Works which we have done: Hell is full of People, that were willing to be Sav'd; but only willing, as the greateſt part of Men are. Can we, think you, reckon much upon our having as good a will as they? We do not intend to be Damn'd; and do you thing any of the Damn'd, did intend to be ſo? What wou'd you ſay of a Sick-Man, who deſir'd to be Cur'd, But yet wou'd take no Remedies; who wou'd content himſelf with thinking ſometimes of the advantages of Health, without takeing the means to recover it? Such are thoſe ſort of People, who content themſelves with deſiring to be Sav'd, without taking any means for it, or ever putting them in execution. But do's any Man of Senſe believe, that thoſe kind of Men can ever truly work out their Salvation? And what wou'd become of our Religion if they did? *May and Novemb.*

What? To be Sav'd, will it be ſufficient to wiſh it without our taking neceſſary means to be ſo? Is there one among all the Damn'd, who wou'd not willingly have been Sav'd at that rate? Can one have any Thoughts more injurious to the Wiſdom of JESUS CARIST, and more unworthy of the Holineſs of our Religion? JESUS CHRIST wou'd not, that even thoſe who have Labour'd moſt towards their Salvation, who have even Labour'd for nothing elſe by the practice of the

*May* and *Novemb.*

greatest Vertues, shou'd believe themselves out of danger, and sure of the Reward; and that Men, who do nothing to be Sav'd, who, buried in the troublesome entanglements of Worldly affairs, and hardly once in their Lives think of their being Christians; that such sort of People shou'd imagine they shall be Sav'd without taking the means to be so, is so odd and extravagant, that we ought rather to Believe, that JESUS CHRIST in giving us so many Laws had impos'd on us; and that the Saints whom we honour, had no Wit, since they did not Believe they cou'd be Sav'd, without leading a Life conformable to the Maxims of the Gospel; and that none are Damn'd, but such as Obstinatly, Maliciously, and in cold Blood, are willing to be Damn'd. It seems not possible to find in Christendom any Men guilty of so gross an Errour, as this; for who can pretend to arrive at, or compass an end, without takeing the means which are proper for attaining it? And yet notwithstanding how many in the World do flatter themselves with the thoughts of desiring their Salvation without being willing to take the means to attain it? And how many Religious Persons may there be, who imagine, that in quitting the World in order to their Salvation, they have done enuff, all that is necessary? Saint *Paul* did not think that all was done, tho' he had quitted all for JESUS CHRIST, and had Labour'd and Suffer'd so much for his Glory: *I*

*Chastise*

*Chaſtiſe and Mortifie my Body*, ſays he, *by the Auſterities of Pennance, and keep it under Subjection, that whilſt I Preach to others, I my ſelf may not be a Caſt-away.*

Castigo corpus meum, & in ſervitutem redigo: ne forte cùm aliis prædicaverim, ipſe reprobus efficiar. 1 *Cor.* c. 9. v. 27.

Whilſt a Man hold's a Wicked Commerce, retains unjuſtly the Goods of another, harbours in his Heart a Mortal Hatred for his Enemy, and is ſo much a Slave to his Paſſions, that he knows not what it is to curb them, can he be ſaid to be ſincerely willing to be Sav'd, only becauſe that ſometimes, thinking of the Glory and Delights enjoy'd by the Bleſſed in Heaven, he judges it were good to be there? No, no; this cannot reaſonably be Believ'd of ſuch a Man. How many now adays do we ſee overwhelm'd with cares, buried in buſineſs, which their Hearts are full of, and their Mind continually taken up with the deſigns of making their Fortunes, without giving themſelves one moment's relaxation, and hardly remembring that they are Chriſtians? If ſome ſuddain, unforeſeen Accident, or a ſolemn Feaſt happen to awaken, or ſtir up in them the firſt impreſſions of Chriſtianity, and the motives, or Ideas thy have had, from their Infancy, of the great truths of our Religion, they do perhaps interrupt for a Moment or two, that croud of thoughts and vain deſires, which wholly take them up; they ſtop, and pauſe a while upon ſome confus'd kind of thoughts, which they have of the moſt terrible truths of Chriſtianity, and frightned at the very apprehenſion of the ſad Con-

*May* and *Novemb.*

*May and Novemb.*

sequences, with which those dreadfull verities do threaten them, they sigh a little, and without going further, within a Moment after return, and replunge themselves in their former Disorders: the first object they meet distracts them from these saveing Reflections; and they themselves search for occasions of Distraction, that they may not be disturb'd, or disquieted in their way of Living, in their indifference, and forgetfulness of Salvation: And yet notwithstanding, these Men are all willing to be Sav'd: They are indeed willing; but it is just as those, who have Damn'd themselves, were willing.

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## II. Point.

### *To be Sav'd it is not enuff to take some of the means; all that are necessary must be taken.*

CONSIDER that in truth there are few so unreasonable, as to pretend to be Sav'd, without being also willing to take the means to be so; the great number is of such as are willing to take some means; but these are such as please their own Inclinations, rather than such as are proper to attain the end they propose to themselves.

Such

Such People are like the Sick Man Saint *Ignatius* ſpeaks of, who was willing enuff to take ſome remedies, not ſuch as the Phyſician judg'd proper to cure him, but ſuch as were moſt agreeable to the Delicacy of his Palat: No Man of Senſe can judge that a Sick Man of this Temper, is deſirous to be effectually cur'd. Is the will to be Sav'd, which we, flattering our ſelves, think we have, more ſincere? It is rare to find any ſort of People, reſolv'd to keep neither Commands nor Counſels; Men are generally willing to be Sav'd, and they very well know, that they muſt take means to be ſo; but they wou'd have the Liberty of chooſing the means. It is hard, if in the great number of Precepts left us by JESUS CHRIST, there ſhou'd not be ſome agreeable to our Inclination; ſo that how neceſſary ſoever the reſt ſhou'd be, we preſently chooſe ſuch as pleaſe our ſelves moſt: we have a horrour of enormous Crimes; but we cannot approve of that reſervedneſs, which is neceſſary to preſerve us in Innocence; and provided our predominant, or darling Paſſion be not touch'd, we will eaſily give the reſt to God. *May* and *Novemb.*

If a Man finds no trouble in Faſting, he is willing to perſwade himſelf that there is no going to Heaven without it; but if he finds it troubleſome to Recollect himſelf, to Conquer his Paſſions, to Pardon Injuries, provided he do's but Faſt, he eaſily perſwad's himſelf that all the reſt may be diſpens'd with without any hazard.

*May* and *Novemb.*

Hence proceeds that monstrous mixture of Vice and Vertues, which is found even among those that make Profession of Piety; and which do's so much injury to true Vertue. From this very Source comes the difficulty of amendment; the thought of having some Vertues, which Men flatter themselves with, lull's them a sleep, as one may say, and makes them pass over very slightly the greatest part of their Faults.

We do indeed make use of some of the means to attain our propos'd end; but we do not take all we ought to take; we do not take the most convenient, but the most easie; those which are least opposit to our Temper and and Inclinations. Some will willingly quit a place of debauch, but they will not quit this or that commerce or employment, which is a continual occasion of Sin.

Others are very willing to give Alms, but they will not get a reasonable doubt clear'd, whether they do not unjustly retain other Men's Goods; for fear they shou'd be oblig'd to Restitution. Others there are who will make Restitution, but will not pardon an Injury: There is another sort, that will pardon Injuries, but knows not how to break of a Friendship that is either Criminal or Dangerous. A Religious Person wou'd not go back again into the World, but yet he do's not take much pains to aspire to the Perfection of his State: He wou'd by no means break his Vows, but yet he is not much concern'd for breaking his

his Rules; altho' it often happens that the Obſervation of his Vows depend's, upon the keeping of thoſe Rules. Thoſe People have, it ſeems, ſome reaſon to believe they are not willing to Damn themſelves; but it is not at all true, that they are really willing to work out their Salvation; their will is not Sincere: They have at beſt but a half will; and they are ſo much the more in danger of their Salvation, that, ſeeming to do ſomething towards it, they believe themſelves ſecure; altho' that by not doing all they ought to do, they put themſelves in evident danger of being loſt. *May* and *Novemb.*

For in good earneſt are Men ſincerely willing to be Sav'd, when they will not take all the means that are neceſſary for it? Is there not reaſon every Day, to ſay to the Sick Man, who will not take all the means neceſſary for his Recovery, that he has a mind to Dye? And is there not as much reaſon to ſay to thoſe ſort of People, who pretend a willingneſs to be Sav'd, without taking all the means neceſſary to be Sav'd, that they have a mind to be Damn'd?

To ſpeak truth, where is our Sincerity? Or how can we be ſaid to be in good earneſt? Dare we impoſe upon our ſelves ſo far, as to think that acting thus negligently and diſingeniouſly, we are really willing to be Sav'd? We who are ſo very Zealous and ſo aſſiduous in Worldly affairs when we are indeed deſirous to ſucceed?

Oh! The great difference that there is between a Man given to ſtudy or buſineſs,

*May* and *Novemb.*

and this very Man Labouring in the affair of his Salvation! Alas! If we were as deſirous of our Salvation, as we are of the Honours and Wealth of this World, we ſhou'd be great Saints: It is certain it do's not depend upon our own will to be Rich, but it do's to be Saints.

But for Worldly affairs we think we can never do enuff: What care what application, and what pains do we not take for them? But why do we try ſo many ways, and make uſe of ſo many means, of which oftentimes we know the greateſt part to be unneceſſary? It is, to the end that, let what will happen, we may have nothing to Reproach our ſelves with; and yet in the affair of Salvation, is it poſſible for us to act as we do, and have nothing at the end of our Life to Reproach our ſelves with? But finally if we have no will to be Sav'd, why do we take ſome of the means? And if we have indeed a mind to be Sav'd, why do we not take all? The reaſon without doubt is, becauſe we find more difficulty in ſome than in others: But, if all be neceſſary, to what purpoſe is it to take the moſt eaſie? Do we not know that in the matter of Salvation, not to do all that one ought to do, is in a manner to do nothing at all?

In an affair of conſequence wou'd a Man be content to take but ſome of the means, and even thoſe too very doubtful, and which the experience of ſeveral Perſons might ſhew, were not proper to make it ſucceed? The affair of our Salvation is moſt aſſuredly an affair of ſome conſequence. JESUS

JESUS CHRIST has aſſur'd us that he makes no account of any thing if we do not give him all: If he will have the Heart, he will have it wholly to himſelf without a Partener: There is no mid-way; you are againſt him, if you are not wholly for him: And yet notwithſtanding, this Luke-warmneſs, this Management in the Service of God, this Dividing between him and the World, do's in theſe Days make up the Character of the greateſt number of Chriſtians. *May and Novemb.*

Thus it is we Live; but can we in the whole Catalogue of Saints find one that made himſelf a Saint by living in this manner? And if we have ſeen Men Dye that Liv'd after this faſhion, did they not leave us in doubt at leaſt, of their Salvation? If all theſe Reflections do not make us take other Meaſures, can we have any reaſon to Believe we ſhall obtain Salvation?

But nothing makes us better ſee the danger of our Salvation, than the manifeſt contradiction there is between our beliefe and our Conduct, or way of Life; which notwithſtanding we do not reflect upon: We are convinc'd that to be Sav'd we muſt believe the Myſtery of the Trinity, and of the Euchariſt, what ever difficulty the underſtanding finds, in ſubmitting it ſelf; and that only becauſe God ſaid it: But has not the very ſame God ſaid, that to be Sav'd, a Man muſt abhor the Maxims of the World, and Daily carry his Croſs, and take exactly all the means which he neglects: I durſt not ſay, that I was ſincerely willing to be Sav'd,

if

*May* and *Novemb.*

if I refus'd to believe the leaſt thing which JESUS CHRIST told us we were bound, in order to our Salvation, to Believe. And how can I ſay, that I am willing to be Sav'd, as long as I am willing to believe but one part of what JESUS CHRIST has ſo clearly told us we are oblig'd to do, to be Sav'd?

Our Religion is in reality too ſincere, not to condemn this contradiction, which is found between our Belief and our Practice. God will have all or none: And indeed he deſerves but little, if he deſerves not all: It wou'd be better, me thinks, to give him nothing at all, than not to give him the whole: This Diviſion is extreamly injurious to God; for Men ſeldom act thus, but where there is but little Merit, or little Authority: God abhor's ſuch kind of managemets; and it were much better to be altogether Cold, than Luke-warm in his Service; which all Men are, who Serve him bnt by halves.

But ſome will ſay, are we then bound to be Perfect? It is not indeed neceſſary; but yet never the leſs, according to the Words of our Saviour himſelf, every Man ought to ſtrive effectually to arrive at the Perfection of the State whereunto God has call'd him. But if this be ſo, the number of theſe Men of good will being ſo ſmall, there will be but very few Sav'd; and who can in reaſon doubt it, after what JESUS CHRIST has ſayd of the ſmalneſs of the number of the Elect? * *Are there many*

* Dilige Domi-

*to*

*to be found that Love God with their whole Hearts?* And if we do not obſerve this firſt Commandment, can we ſay that our will is ſincere? And ſo long as we will make uſe but of ſome certain means, without troubling our ſelves about the reſt, ſo long as we puzzle our ſelves and keep a ſtir about ſome particular, pretended good Works, which we do without meddling with the prevailing Paſſion, which is to us a continual ſource of Sins; can it ever be truly ſaid, that we are ſincerely willing to be Sav'd? I ſee plainly, Lord, that I have hetherto had but a half will, which has only ſerv'd to amuſe me, and to Conceal the evident danger I am in of loſing my ſelf; but I have reſolv'd, me thinks, in good earneſt, to be of the number of thoſe who are willing to be Cur'd at any rate; and I have reaſon, my moſt loving Saviour, to Believe that my will is ſincere; but it is your Grace that muſt make it efficacious; and this is what I hope for from your great Mercy. I am convinc'd that to be Sav'd, a Man muſt make uſe of all the neceſſary means: Let me but know, Lord, what you wou'd have me to do, and I will do it, I proteſt. I will uſe no more managements in your ſervice; *Command Lord, for I am ready to Obey you.*

tum Deum tuum ex toto corde tuo. *Matt. 6.*

*May* and *Novemb.*

Paratum cor meum Deus, paratum cor meum.

THE

# THE SECOND MEDITATION. OF Of Luke-Warmneſs.

## I. Point.

*There is no State more dangerous for Salvation than that of a Luke-Warm Soul.*

*May* and *Novemb.*

CONSIDER that a Soul is in the State of Lukewarmneſs, when it is diſpos'd to avoid grievous Sins, but makes no account of ſmaller one's; ſlubbers and hurries over negligently his Spiritual Exerciſes, ſays his Prayers without Attention; Confeſſes without Amendment, and Communicates without Fervour, or Fruit; and is ſo little ſenſible of Grace, that he Sins without Fear, or Remorſe.

In

In this State a Man has a kind of indifference for higher Vertues, which quickly degenerates into a Loathing and Diſguſt; he finds a languiſhing and wearineſs in the Service of God, which makes the Yoke of our Lord become heavy and inſupportable, his Mind is always wandring and diſtracted, ſeldom attentive either to himſelf or to God, indifferently runing about all ſorts of Objects; ſometimes to one, ſometimes to another; he can never reſolve to Recollect and Entet into himſelf, becauſe he can find no Peace there: In this State a Man makes no Scruple to expoſe himſelf to occaſions of Danger; what good he do's, he do's but by humour; and acquits himſelf of ſome certain Duties of Piety, but by cuſtom; and provided that by keeping ſome meaſures, he can ſecure himſelf againſt the reproaches of thoſe he endeavours to manage, he is not much concern'd to pleaſe God; and indeed he do's almoſt nothing without diſpleaſing him. *May* and *Novemb.*

He eaſily gives himſelf up to commit all ſorts of Venial Sins, even deliberatly: Wearineſs and Diſguſt attend all the Practices of Devotion to which he is indiſpenſably oblig'd: He has an averſion for all Perſons of more eminent Piety, becauſe their Vertue is a troubleſome Cenſure and Reproach of his Actions: He is only pleas'd with the Converſation of the Imperfect, becauſe their manners do always authorize his own irregularities. Hence ariſe thoſe particular Friendſhips, ſo dangerous to the Salvation of ſuch pretended Friends; thoſe dull inſipid Railleries,

*May and Novemb.*

Railleries, upon the Fervour and Punctuality of good Men, which quite extinguiſh the ſmall remainder of good thoughts in a Soul: And to compleat his Misfortune, a Man is no ſooner in this unhappy State of Luke-warmneſs, but he frames to himſelf a falſe Conſcience, under the ſhelter of which, one who otherwiſe frequent's the Sacraments, and who flatters himſelf in doing ſome good Works, feeds and nouriſhes within him ſecret averſions, envenom'd jealouſies, dangerous friendſhips and familiarities, even ſuch as are criminal, a Spirit of bitterneſs and murmuring againſt his Superiours, a fond Pride and Self-Love, which in a manner diffuſes it ſelf and runs thro' all his Actions, and a hundred other Faults of this Nature; amidſt which this Perſon Lives with great Tranquillity, falſly perſwading himſelf, that there is nothing very faulty in all this, and ſearching for Reaſons to excuſe Crimes which God condemn's as grievous Sins; and which he himſelf will condemn as ſuch, when he comes to Dye; when Paſſion will no longer hinder him from ſeeing things juſt as they are in themſelves: So that it is not hard to conceive, how great a danger a Man in this State runs of his Salvation.

The State of a Soul in Mortal Sin is indeed much to be fear'd; and yet notwithſtanding, the State of Luke-warmneſs, in the opinion of JESUS CHRIST himſelf, is worſe then the State of Sin. It were better for you, ſays the Angel in the *Apocalypſe*, that you were either altogether Cold, or altogether

altogether Hot; but ſince you are neither, but Luke-warm; I will begin to Spew you out as Unpleaſant and Inſipid Meat, which I can no longer bear, and which I am forc'd to caſt out. *May and Novemb.*

JESUS CHRIST did not abhor the greateſt Sinners; they all found in his Heart a Fountain of Mercy, a Source of Pardon for all their Crimes; *Judas* himſelf was not abhor'd by JESUS CHRIST, and yet he abhors a Luke-warm Soul; and a Perſon of this Temper do's not find in the Heart of JESUS CHRIST, that tender and compaſſionat Reception, which the greateſt Sinners do: And how can a Man in this State have any Hopes to be Sav'd?

Altho' a Man Lives never ſo irregularly, commits the moſt enormous Sins, and is guilty of the greateſt Diſorders poſſible; how difficult ſoever this makes his Converſion, yet ought we not to Deſpair of his Salvation; for the eaſier that a Mans Diſorders are to be known, the liker it is, that he ſhou'd be touch'd with a Senſe and Abhorrence of them. Let but the rigour and laſtingneſs of Eternal Torments be ſtrongly repreſented, Death and the ſeverity of God's Judgments preſs'd home upon him, and the Thoughts of theſe terrible Truths, which aſtoniſh by their Novelty, and ſhake by their Force the greateſt Sinners, are able to Convert him. But nothing of this is able to work upon a Luke-warm Soul; this is a State, which admits of no Remedy; the Sins, which a Luke-warm Soul commits,

*May* and *Novemb.*

mits, not being ſuch groſs and ſcandalous Sins, as beget a horrour in Timorous Perſons; but being purely Interiour, and intermix'd with ſome Actions of Piety, they eaſily eſcape the Reflections of a Conſcience, that is not very Nice and Tender; ſo that not eaſily perceiving the greatneſs of the Evil, it takes no pains to Remedy it.

Beſides every thing is uſeleſs to a Perſon that is in this condition; Prayers, Exhortations, Lectures, Maſſes, Meditations, Sacraments, and all is without Fruit; whether it be, that the little Profit, which a Luke-warm Soul has till then reap'd by it, diſguſt's him, and takes from him the deſire of makeing uſe of them; or that, being accuſtom'd to theſe Remedies, they have the leſs effect upon him; and that having a hundred times unprofitably heard theſe terrible Truths of Salvation ſpoken of, and having himſelf alſo a hundred times perhaps ſpoken of them to others, they make no more any impreſſion on his Mind.

He receives little Graces, becauſe he has been unfaithful in that little he had receiv'd; his Faults are always conſiderable, becauſe they are accompanied with a greater contempt, with a more injurious Malice, and a blacker Ingratitude, than that of other Sinners. This odious mixture of Good and Evil, which makes up the Character of a Luke-warm Soul, plainly ſhews how very injurious his Conduct is to God. The ſeeming good he do's, ſhews but too evidently, that it is not by a forgetfulneſs of God, that he

he Sins; but the imperfect languiſhing manner of his doing this good, ſhews the low, and mean, Idea or Notion that he has of the God he Serves with ſo much indifference and diſguſt: So that it may be ſaid, this diſguſt is mutual; the Soul has a diſguſt for JESUS CHRIST, and JESUS CHRIST has a diſguſt for this Soul: And we muſt not wonder, if ſuch ſort of People, as ſoon as they have receiv'd the Communion, be as ready to fall again into their old Faults, and to commit their former Crimes, as if they had not receiv'd at all. They will hear you very Patiently, parrying, as one may ſay, at the thruſts of a wholeſome Advertiſment, by the thoughts of their pretended good Works; againſt which, as a Ship among the Rocks, the good thoughts, and the ſtrongeſt inſpirations do commonly ſplit and miſcarry. Hence proceeds that ſtrange blindneſs the Luke-warm Soul is in, and that terrible Inſenſibility, which is the moſt frightful of all Chaſtiſements, and the chief of all Misfortunes. This it was which made Saint *Bernard*, and Saint *Bonaventure* ſay, that it is much leſs difficult to move and convert a Secular Perſon, tho' never ſo Wicked, than a Religious Perſon that Lives in the State of Luke-warmneſs. What hope can remain for one in this Condition? His Diſtemper is without remedy; nay he himſelf will not have a remedy, becauſe he is not ſenſible of his Ilneſs. He is a Sick Man, ſo much the more to be Deſpair'd of, that he laughs at thoſe who

*May* and *Novemb.*

be'ieve

*May and Novemb.*

believe him Sick: And this has made ſome ſay, that it is not a leſs Miracle to convert a Luke-warm Soul, than to reſtore ſight to the Blind, or raiſe the Dead to Life.

There is none but thou alone, my God, able to work this Miracle: There is no Evil how incurable ſoever it may ſeem, but thou canſt remove if thou wilt; it is true, that the diſguſt thou haſt for a Luke-warm Soul makes me very much afraid; it is impoſſible for me to have the ſame Confidence in my Prayer, that I ſhou'd have, if I begg'd the Converſion of the greateſt Sinners: But, my God, I acknowledge that I have been hetherto in this Luke-warm State, and the ſenſe, which thou giveſt me of it, makes me believe that thou doſt deſire I ſhou'd quit it: Permit not that this new Grace, which may perhaps be the laſt, ſhou'd prove uſeleſs to me; thou art willing that I ſhou'd be Sav'd, and I my ſelf am alſo willing; who then ſhall obſtruct my Salvation?

## II. Point.

## II. Point.

### *There is no State from which it is harder to be freed than that of Luke-warmneſs.*

CONSIDER that this is not only a very dangerous State and in ſome manner without remedy; but that which is yet more ſtrange is, that when once a Man fal's into it, it is almoſt impoſſible ever to get out of it: For to get out of a dangerous State, a Man muſt not only know that he is in it, but alſo know the greatneſs of his danger; neither of which the Luke-warm Soul do's apprehend. *May and Novemb.*

Tho' a Sinner be plung'd in the laſt diſorders, he eaſily knows the danger he is in: And there are ſtill ſome happy moments, wherein by the Favour of the ſmalleſt ray of Grace, he diſcovers ſo great a deformity in his Soul, that he is the firſt to deplore his misfortune; and this knowledge and this ſaving Senſe renders his Converſion much leſs difficult.

A Luke-warm Soul never believes himſelf in the State of Luke-warmneſs: From the moment that he acknowledges himſelf in this State, he ceaſes to be in it; and a Man ſeldom

*May and Novemb.*

ſeldome diſcovers the State he was in, but when he becomes, on the contrary, truly Fervent and Devout: Which makes the Converſion of a Luke-warm Soul almoſt impoſſible; for by what means can one perſwade him that he is in this State, ſince blindneſs is the firſt effect of it?

As his Relaxation comes but by little and little, ſo he is but very little ſenſible of his Faults; he firſt accuſtoms himſelf to them, and at laſt is pleas'd with them; nothing ſtrikes or touches him in this State; and he never diſtruſt's he has done amiſs, he never diſcovers any new thing in himſelf to Scandalize us, and he falls into Luke-warmnes, without omitting any one of his Exerciſes of Piety; and this Luke-warmneſs takes it's riſe from the Imperfections, which inſenſibly ſteal into theſe very Exerciſes; and the ſight of a great many real Faults is hid from him by the ſhew and appearance of a falſe Vertue.

It ſeems alſo that God, who makes ſo much noiſe to awaken a Sinner, is ſilent, and do's himſelf hinder the noiſe on purpoſe that a Luke-warm Soul may Dye in his Mortal Lethargy. I will begin, ſays he, to Spew you out; I will begin, that is to ſay, it ſhall not be done all at once, but inſenſibly by little and little, that it may not be perceiv'd: Inſomuch that a Soul is rejected as Reprobate, without apprehending it's being ſo; without at all diſtruſting the unhappy State it is in. Upon what account may a Man hope that he has a

mind

mind to quit this State? Or how ſhall he get out of it? Where, to compleat his unhappineſs, the counſels of his beſt Friends, the moſt wholſom advertiſments of a wiſe Directour, of a zealous Superiour, good Examples, and all, are ill receiv'd by a Man in this State? And this Inſenſibility, this ſtubburneſs, ſometimes go's ſo far, that one wou'd ſay the Perſon is Poſſeſs'd, in whom are to be ſeen by every Body but himſelf, ſuch plain Marks of his being abandon'd by God, and moſt certainly Reprobated. *May* and *Novemb.*

The greateſt Sinners, ſays Saint *Bonaventure*, have been obſerv'd to quit their Diſorders, and become true Penitents: But a Luke-warm Soul has hardly been ever ſeen to leave that State; and this may be meant by thoſe terrible Words of Saint *Paul*, which ought to make all ſuch unhappy Perſons tremble and reflect: It is impoſſible, ſays he, that is, extreamly difficult, for ſuch as have been once illuminated and have receiv'd many Graces, and who preferably to many others, have been favor'd with the gifts of the Holy Ghoſt and taſted the ſweets of a Spiritual Life, and the great truths of Salvation, and ſhall afterwards wax cold, and grow weary of the Service of God, and fall back into their former Sins; ever to recover, and repent ſincerely.

But my God, what good will all this do a Luke-warm Soul, if you your ſelf do not, by a Mitacle of Mercy, make him ſenſible of the Evil Condition he is in? Will he ever underſtand, unleſs you inwardly tell

*May* and *Novemb.*

him, that this is his Picture? Or what advantage will it be to him, to know it, if you do not give him ſuch a powerfull Grace as may make him quit this unhappy State? Let us conſider whether there be nothing for us to fear in this Point: Since the Perſons that are in this State of Luke-warmneſs will commonly taſte of all the Exerciſes of Piety, either out of humour or curioſity, it is impoſſible but that many ſhou'd Read this Meditation when they make this Retreat of a Day; but let them not flatter themſelves, that it concern's not them; we may all of us reap ſome benefit by it, if, without diſguiſing any thing, we ſeriouſly and in cold Blood examin, whether there be any ſigns of Luke-warmneſs in our Conduct, and behaviour; whether the uſage of the Sacraments be not unprofitable to us, and whether in practiſing the Exerciſes of Vertue, we do from Day to Day become leſs Imperfect or not.

## THE THIRD MEDITATION.

UPON

The thoughts which we ſhall have at the Hour of Death.

See the Third Meditation of the Month of *January* and *July*. Page. 67.

THE

# THE FIRST MEDITATION. OF Hell.

## I. Point.

*The Damn'd ſuffer there all that can be ſuffer'd.*

REMEMBER that there is a Hell; that is to ſay, a place to Torment the Souls of ſuch as Dye in their Sins. By often hearing of Hell, we are accuſtom'd to the Word, and to it's ſignification, in ſo much that we are hardly mov'd at it; but if we well underſtood what Hell is, the remembrance of it wou'd always give us a greater horrour; let us repreſent to our ſelves in the Center of the Earth, a Lake of Fire and *June* and *Decemb.*

*June* and *Decemb.*

Flames of immenſe and prodigious depth and breadth, and that the Bodies of the Damn'd are all plung'd into it; the Fire burn's and pierces them thro' and thro', the Flames enter in at their Eyes and at their Ears, they draw them in with their Breaths at their Mouths and at their Noſtrils; their Skin will be perfectly broil'd, and within this very Skin their Fleſh, their Blood and their Humours, will boyl without ceaſing; their Brains alſo within their Scull will boyl in the ſame manner; all the Marrow in their Bones, the Bones and Scull themſelves will become red hot as a Piece of Iron, newly drawn out of the Furnace; the Fire will be in all Parts of the Body, and all the Parts of the Body will be in the Fire.

Altho' this Fire were but like ours, yet wou'd the Torment be very Dreadful: To be caſt alive into a bottomleſs Pit of Fire, and Flames, O God, what a Puniſhment is this! But yet notwithſtanding our Fire bears no proportion to that of Hell: Our Fire is clear and ſparkling, that of Hell is black, to that degree, that it makes darkneſs it ſelf blacker; our Fire is an effect of the Love and Bounty of God; that of Hell is the effect of an Enrag'd Power, and the infinite Hatred of the Creator, who add's to it's Natural Ardor all his own Force and Induſtry, to render it more Active and Raging; ſo that it is not by Fire alone that the Damn'd are Tormented in Hell; but this Infernal Fire makes them ſuffer at the ſame time, all manner of Pains and Torments imaginable.

Fancy

Fancy to your ſelf a Sick Man tormented by the Gout, or a violent Colick; how do's he roar and cry out at the ſharpneſs of his Pains: He wou'd willingly Dye to put an end to the evil he endures; and yet he ſuffers but in one Part of his Body, and all the World ſtrives to comfort him; he has the liberty to complain, and the comfort to ſee himſelf pittied: But what wou'd become of him, if, in every Part of his Body, he ſuffer'd as great pain as that he do's, either in his Joynts or in his Entrals? What wou'd become of him, if inſtead of ſuccouring, they ſhou'd treat him ill, and and even not allow him to complain? *June and Decemb.*

In Hell there are not only all the Evils which Men are capable of ſuffering in this Life; but all thoſe, and a thouſand thouſand times more: All the Pains of the World are there, Sharp, and Bitter, complicated one within another; every pain is extream; and they ſuffer there at one and the ſame inſtant, all manner of Pains: In the midſt of all theſe Torments, they ſhall not be allow'd either to take, or hope for any Eaſe, or Conſolation: What is a drop of Water for a whole Sea of Flames? And yet this little, this ſingle drop, this nothing, will be refus'd them.

A Sick Man eaſes himſelf, at leaſt ſometimes, by changing his place; but a Damn'd perſon ſhall for ever remain, in the midſt of the Fire, immoveable as a Rock.

All thoſe Torments are dreadful, and yet but a ſmall thing, in compariſon of the Re-

*June* and *Decemb.*

gret and Sorrow the Damn'd will have at the ſenſe and Reflection on the time paſt, and the ill uſage they have made of that time: Their Minds will be employ'd, for all Eternity, in repreſenting to them the Vanity of thoſe Objects, which led them aſtray from God: What! For enjoying, during that Moment of Life, ſome inſipid, fading Pleaſure; what! For paſſing away in ſome little State of Honour, that atom of Time, of which I hardly have any remaining Idea, have I plung'd my ſelf into this Abyſs of Darkneſs, and this Everlaſting Fire? What are become of thoſe Fantoms, or Apparitions of Glory, Greatneſs and Reputation, which wholly took me up, and made me forget Eternity? What is become of that Fortune, to which I Sacrific'd all things? What are become of thoſe Perſons whom I Lov'd; and thoſe others, of whoſe vain Judgments, Diſcourſe and Power, I ſtood in aw? But alas, alas! Behold what I preferr'd to the Eſteem and Friendſhip of God, what I purchas'd by the loſs of my Soul!

The Damn'd Perſon will for all Eternity think of the eaſineſs of working out his Salvation, and of the Reward which he has loſt: It was an eaſie thing to have Confeſs'd my Sin; I enjoy'd my Health ſo many Years after my Fall; God was for ſo long a time offering me his Friendſhip; he gave me warning, Preſs'd and Sollicited me; what did I think of, I who paſs'd for a Man of Judgment, when I wou'd put off my Converſion to the Hour of my Death? I thought

of

of the danger I expos'd my ſelf to, I even trembl'd with Horrour at the thoughts of the Miſery of thoſe that Damn themſelves, and yet I alſo have Damn'd my ſelf? I needed to have done no more good, than what my Friends, my Relations, and my Companions have done. I had begun ſo well, it wou'd have coſt me little to have gon on, and tho' it ſhou'd have coſt me more, was there any thing I ought not to have done to have avoided Hell? *June* and *Decemb.*

Add to theſe inconceivable pains, theſe Mortal Regrets, the ſight of God Eternally provok'd, a God irrecoverably loſt, loſt for all Eternity; this is the height, the extremity of all the Pains, which theſe unhappy Victims of the Hatred and Vengeance of God do endure. A Man muſt in ſome meaſure comprehend what God is, to conceive what a Torment it is to loſe him without all hopes of Recovery: This loſs at preſent moves us but little; but they that have had this loſs, judge much otherwiſe of it, than they did before: To be always thinking that there was for me a Redeemer; and that I was not willing to lay hold on the price of my Redemption; to think how much I was Lov'd by JESUS CHRIST, and that it will be then impoſſible for me to Love him, and that I ſhall know I am no longer Loved by him, and that he is not concern'd for me, nor touch'd with the Evils which I ſuffer, nor has the leaſt Compaſſion for the great, and inexpreſſible Miſeries which I do, and muſt for ever endure.

*June and Decemb.*

Thou, Lord, who haſt taken ſo much pains to bring me back to thee; thou who haſt been at ſo great expences to hinder me from deſtroying my ſelf, wilt rejoyce to ſee me plung'd into this bottomleſs Pit of unquenchable Fire; thou wilt then deſtroy me irrecoverably, and that without regret; thou wilt no longer be my Father, nor my Saviour! Ah! I do not wonder, that there ſhou'd be nothing in Hell, but Tears, Gnaſhing of Teeth, Howling, Deſpair and Rage; and God, who by one ſingle Act of his Will made all the World, ſhall be ſo wholly employ'd to make an unhappy Creature ſuffer, as to drain, if I may ſo ſpeak, all his Force and all his Power, to augment it's ſufferings. There is a Hell, and there are Sinners; there is a Hell, and all Chriſtians Believe it; and this Hell is full of Chriſtians: There is a Hell, and there are Sinners; there is a Hell, and Chriſtians Believe it; and yet alas!. This Hell is full of Chriſtians: There is a Hell, and there is in it, at this very hour, an infinite number of unhappy Wretches encompaſs'd round about, and penetrated thro' and thro' with Fire and Flames; and it is certain, that a great number, of thoſe who at preſent Live among us, will be caſt down headlong into this Hell; and many, even of thoſe who Read this, who Meditate upon the Torments of Hell, will one Day become it's Victimes: Shall not I be of this number! Ah, my moſt Loving Redeemer, you have not Purchas'd me with an intention to Deſtroy.

ſtroy me: But have you not likewiſe given all your Blood, for thoſe very Men who have loſt themſelves? I tremble Lord, and am afraid; but what good will my Fear do me, if yet notwithſtanding I Deſtroy my ſelf? Ah my good Maſter! I am willing to Save my ſelf at any rate; permit me not, I beſeech you by your moſt Precious Blood, to Damn my ſelf; what great Glory will redound to you, my Lord, by ſhutting me up for all Eternity in that bottomleſs Pit of Fire and Flames? Am I an Object worthy of ſo cruel a Revenge? * In Hell they Love you not at all, nor do they there Sing forth your Praiſes: To let me run headlong into it, is but to increaſe the number of thoſe that Hate you and Blaſpheme your Name: I am deſirous to Save my ſelf, tho' all the reſt of the World ſhou'd Periſh: You are willing, my God, that I ſhou'd Save my ſelf; I build upon your Mercy and thro' that I Hope I ſhall be of the number of the Elect.

*June* and *Decemb.*

* Non mortui laudabunt te, neque omnes qui deſcendunt in infernum.

## II. Point.

### *They Suffer Eternally.*

*June and Decemb.*

CONSIDER that the pains of Hell, are not only Univerſal, Exceſſive, and Dreadful; but that they are alſo Eternal; that is to ſay, that how Dreadful ſoever the pains are, which men ſuffer in Hell, there is no hope of being ever eas'd, no hope of ever ſeeing them ended.

What grief will it be to a Damn'd Soul, to turn his Eyes and look back, from the Abyſs of Eternity, after he ſhall have been therein burning a hundred thouſand Millions of Years, upon that ſmall portion of Time, which he will hardly be able to find at the end of the infinite number of Ages, which from the Day of his Death till then ſhall all be paſt over? Life, even when neerly look'd at, ſeems but one Moment; it ſeems to us, to us I ſay, who are yet Alive, that all that is paſt of it, is but a Moment. When Men are at the hour of their Death, how long ſoever their Life has laſted, they can ſcarce perſwade themſelves, that there was any interval between the Day of their Birth, and that whereto they are now at laſt arriv'd. We ſeek for this Life, which has paſt away like a Dream: What will it be, when, after our Deaths, we

we ſhall have paſs'd over Millions of Years? When our Children, and our Children's Children, ſhall all be Buried? When Time ſhall have Ruin'd the Houſes we have Built, Deſtroy'd the Cities that have given us Birth, Overturn'd the States where we have Liv'd; when the end of Ages ſhall have Buried all the Univerſe in it's own Aſhes, and that Millions of Millions of Ages ſhall, after that time, have run out and be expir'd? *June* and *Decemb.*

All this is Dreadful, and yet notwithſtanding, all this is nothing to Eternity; a Damn'd Soul, which ſhall have ſuffer'd during all this vaſt extent of Time, will have yet a hundred thouſand times more to ſuffer; and all this together, is yet nothing, in proportion to Eternity.

Let us ſuppoſe that a Damn'd Soul ſhou'd be a thouſand Years ſhedding but one Tear, and that his Tears were all to be gather'd up and kept by God; in how many thouſand thouſand Years, think you, wou'd he have ſhed enuff to fill the hollow of on's Hand only? *Cain*, the firſt that was Damn'd, wou'd not yet have ſhed above ſix or ſeven Tears; *Judas* not above one: But what prodigious extent of Time muſt go to the makeing up a Rivulet, a Flood? What to fill up all the places now cover'd with the Sea? But what if a Damn'd Soul were to ſuffer till his Tears had Drown'd the whole Univerſe, and fill'd all that vaſt ſpace between the Heavens and the Earth? The Wit of Man is loſt and confounded in the Contemplation of this vaſt extent of Time;

*June* and *Decemb.*

yet notwithanding; how inconceivable ſoever this wonderful extent of time is, it is yet nothing in Compariſon of Eternity; and there will a time come, when every Damn'd Perſon may truly ſay, if I had ſhed but one Tear for every thouſand Years I have been in Hell, I ſhou'd by this time have Drown'd the World, and my Tears wou'd have fill'd the whole ſpace that is between Heaven and Earth; and tho' all this has been paſs'd over in dreadful Torments, I have yet a whole Eternity to ſuffer; and yet even all this, is nothing at all when compar'd with that terrible, frightful Eternity: After a thouſand, and a hundred thouſand millions of Years, a hundred, and a hundred times reiterated; after this infinite number of Ages, wherein our Underſtanding is loſt, and confounded; the Fire ſhall be ſtill as Active, and Raging; the Body and the Soul as much diſpos'd to ſuffer, and as ſenſible of ſuffering; God as much irritated, and as irreconcileable, as at the firſt Moment.

Oh dreadful Eternity! Incomprehenſible Eternity! For one ſingle Criminal thought of one moment, ſo many millions of Ages paſs'd in Fire and Flames, as Men have Liv'd Days, as Hours in thoſe Days; nay as Minuts in thoſe Hours! O God what equality is this? And yet will there never come a time, when thoſe pains ſhall be ended. But to be aſſur'd, that never, never ſhall thoſe Torments ceaſe; to ſuffer always, and to be certain of ſuffering always, to be Eternally

nally thinking of the good we have loſt, of the infinite Evils into which we have run our ſelves, of the means we had to avoid them: To have continually before our Eyes the Vanity, and the ſhort Duration of all that drew us off from God, the ineffable ſweetneſs we ſhou'd have found in his Service, the infinite difference between the pains, that diſcourag'd from the purſuit of Vertue, and thoſe which Men ſuffer in the midſt of thoſe Flames; to have for ever in our Mind, the thoughts of this Dreadful Eternity, without ever being able, for one Moment, to turn away our Mind from this thought; to be always Burning, Howling, and Deſpairing, is a more inconſolable State, than any heart can conceive, or words expreſs? *June and Decemb.*

If theſe thoughts do not Convert us, if the conſideration of theſe Torments, of this Eternity, of this Eternal, vain Repentance, do not withdraw us from Sin, and the vain amuſements of Life, we prove our ſelves to be no longer reaſonable Men, or elſe no Chriſtians.

It was theſe terrible Truths, which made the Martyrs, Peopl'd the Deſerts, and which at this Day alſo fill the Monaſteries! What do we think of them? Have thoſe People done well? Was it wiſely done to ſpare nothing, to try all things and leave no Stone unturn'd to avoid Hell?

Men give all they have, to get out of a Dungeon; and to what Pains and Labour do they not freely condemn themſelves to ſpin out their Lives? And what do they do, or, to ſpeak more properly, what do they not refuſe to do, to avoid Hell? That

*June* and *Decemb.*

That God ſhou'd have made Hell to puniſh with Eternal Torments thoſe who offend him! O terrible Juſtice! But that Men ſhou'd, with a ſenſe of Hell, offend God! To ſay the Truth, to puniſh ſo black an act of Malice, an everlaſting Hell is not too great a Puniſhment: And if there had been none, God muſt have made one on purpoſe. The very thought of Hell makes us tremble, but it ſeems we are not willing to think of it, leaſt we ſhou'd be afraid of it; and yet we are not afraid of running headlong into it: We turn away our Eyes, as much as is poſſible, from this infinite duration of Torments, ſo very frightful is even the proſpect of it; and yet we refuſe to take another courſe; to go one ſtep out of the way which leads us thither.

There is a Hell, and yet Men can take delight in Pleaſures, Sin can have it's Charms, the ways of Vertue muſt be thought Difficult; and there are Religious Perſons that are Luke-warm and Imperfect, and Chriſtians that are Debauch'd: Behold what is as aſtoniſhing and as inconceivable as Eternity it ſelf!

But to avoid Hell is it neceſſary to be Perfect? No, it is not neceſſary: But yet can we remove too far from a raging bottomleſs Pit of Fire, into which ſo many have tumbled headlong? And can we be too much on our guard, take too many meaſures, or too much precaution, to avoid an unhappy Eternity, endleſs Fires, endleſs Sorrows, an everlaſting Hell?

O how

O how ſenſible is the regret the Damn'd feel in Hell! There they cry out, it was my fault, my own fault only, that I was not as Eternally Happy, as I muſt now be Eternally Miſerable? It was an eaſie matter for me to have been a Saint; and I am not one, for no other reaſon but becauſe I was not pleas'd to be one. My Brethren are in Heaven; and behold I am here in Hell: I us'd to railly thoſe, who, for fear of being what I am, liv'd otherwiſe than I did; and now what wou'd I not be willing to have done, to be what they are? I call'd their inward Recollection, Modeſty, Punctuality, and Reſervedneſs; Melancholy, Stupidity, Weakneſs and Scrupuloſity: Ah wretch that I am! How unfortunate for me, that I was not melancholy and Scrupulous at that rate! That Regularity, that Strictneſs and exact Obſervation of Duties, has made them Saints; they are now in Heaven, fill'd with the greateſt Delights; and what in the midſt of theſe Flames is now become of that pretended Joy, and good Humour, which made me railly them for every thing? If I had done as ſuch, or ſuch an one, whom I liv'd with; if I had done what on a certain Day God Inſpir'd me to do; if I had made a return, or benefited by ſuch, or ſuch a Grace; if I had avoided this, or that occaſion of Sinning; if I had practis'd ſuch, or ſuch a Vertue; if I had Mortified my ſelf, if I had a mind to it, I ſhou'd now have been in Heaven: But there is now an end of all; I am loſt, irrecoverably Loſt; I am Damn'd, for

*June* and *Decemb.*

*June* and *Decemb.*

for ever Damn'd; O dreadful Sorrow: And that which compleats the greatness of these Pains, is for them to remember, that they had before hand thought of these Pains, and of the Regret which they shou'd one Day come to have, in case they shou'd be Damn'd.

And after all this, that there shou'd yet be any one so mad as to Damn himself! O great God! An Eternal Hell is a just Punishment for such as are Damn'd.

Is it possible that one shou'd not think of Hell, or that thinking of it, he shou'd not be Converted? But if one's already Converted, is it necessary to think of it? It is necessary to prevent one's being Perverted; and that you may see how necessary it is, you are to know, that the greatest Saints, those pure Souls inflam'd with a sincere Love of God, did Believe it was necessary for them to think of it, and the thoughts of it made them tremble; and yet there are some, who make a Profession of vertue, Religious Persons, to whom the thoughts of Hell do not seem necessary; the reason is that the thought of it is insupportable to them, and they know but too well, that they have just cause to fear being condemn'd to it: But when shall a Man, for having a greater account to make, have the less reason to be afraid? And for being oblig'd to more Duties, have cause to expect being the less severely Punish'd?

Thou hast very good reason Lord, to tell us that Hell is the only Evil we have to fear; for what do's it signifie to me to be forgotten, persecuted by all the World, and

to

to lead an Obſcure and Mortified Life, provided I be not Damn'd? Ah, my God! If you are deſirous to Puniſh my Crimes, you have yet time enuff; I have a Soul and a Body capable of ſuffering; take Vengeance of me; it is but juſt; but do not Damn me: How hard, how ſevere ſoever the Torments be, that you will make me endure; I will, notwithſtanding, Kiſs and Bleſs the Hand that ſtrik's me during this Life, ſo that I be not Damn'd. I ſhall here at leaſt ſatisfie your Juſtice, and ſhall Hope in your Mercy, and Love you; but what Comfort will it be to you, to ſee me in Hell, buried in Flames, tranſported with Rage and Deſpair; Hating, and Curſing you, and continually vomiting out Blaſphemies againſt you? *June* and *Decemb.*

Ah what, Lord! Will you give me time to think of the Pains of Hell, for no other end but to augment the grief I ſhall one Day have for Damning my ſelf? And that too, after I have often thought of thoſe Torments? I am yet ſign'd with the Blood of JESUS CHRIST, and it is in Vertue of this Blood, my God, that I beg your Mercy: You have purchas'd me at too great a Price to have my Deſtruction indifferent to you: I am willing and Deſirous to be Sav'd; do not ſuffer me to be loſt; and if I muſt be puniſh'd, let it be in this Life, and not in that unhappy one which never is to end. Burn me in this World, and cut me to pieces, ſo you do but ſpare me for ever in that which is to come. Hîc ure, hîc ſeca; modo in æternum parcas.

THE

# THE SECOND MEDITATION, OF The Fruits of Repentance.

## I. Point.

### *Repentance is neceſſary for all ſorts of People.*

*June* and *Decemb.*

CONSIDER that there is no way to get to Heaven but by Mortification and Pennance: JESUS CHRIST has ſhew'd us no other; and the Saints themſelves, who in their Mother's Womb were confirm'd in Grace, went no other way: It is an Errour to Believe, that Pennance is only neceſſary for great Sinners: Nor is it a leſs miſtake, to imagine that Mortification is a Vertue proper only for Perfect Souls. If we are Sinners, we are oblig'd to Repent, to endeavour to ſoften

ſoften God's Juſtice, and to obtain from his Mercy Pardon for our Crimes: If we are ſo happy as never to have loſt our Innocence, Pennance is not the leſs neceſſary to preſerve that Precious Treaſure: We may Sin; we have Sinn'd; are the two powerful Motives to induce us to Practice it. *June* and *Decemb.*

Can Men reaſonably Believe, that Pennance is only proper for ſuch as are Religious, and that Mortification ſhou'd reign only in Cloiſters; ſince all Men agree, that in the world People do much oftner Sin; and that there is in it much more danger? Let them but reflect, that thoſe Religious Perſons, whom they think indiſpenſably oblig'd to the Exerciſe of Pennance, did for the moſt part enter into Religion, without loſing their Innocence; and yet that Perſons, who do not diſown their having committed a great many Sins, and who are every Moment in danger of Committing more, ſhou'd go about to perſwade themſelves, that Mortification and Pennance are not things proper for them, is very ſtrange and wonderful.

Altho' we had nothing but our own Paſſions to Tame and Conquer, cou'd we reaſonably hope to ſucceed without the Exerciſe of Pennance? And which of us can, with any reaſon, hope to work out his Salvation without overcoming his Paſſions?

It is an Article of Faith, that none, but ſuch as do Violence to themſelves, ſhall enter into Heaven; and yet we pretend to get thither without Mortification. The Life of a Man upon Earth is a continual War-Fare:

For

*June* and *Decemb.*

For the Fleſh, as Saint *Paul* ſays, has Deſires contrary to thoſe of the Spirit, and the Spirit has Deſires contrary to thoſe of the Fleſh, and without the Exerciſe of Pennance, what Hope to overcome?

Men ſatisfie all their Senſual Appetits, take exceeding great care of their Bodies, and follow blindly their Natural Inclinations; and in this State they live without any fear in the World, expos'd to the greateſt dangers: In good earneſt either thoſe ſort of People are not of the ſame Nature with other Men, or elſe it muſt be ſaid, that the Enemy of Mankind, either fears or reſpects them, or that they are confirm'd in Grace, or that they run a great riske, which is the more likely, to Live and Dye in their Sins. What, muſt the Fervent and Generous Souls pay ſo dear for Heaven; and ſhall it coſt the Lazy and Imperfect People, almoſt nothing at all? Saint *Paul* Chaſtis'd his own Body, he added to the Perſecutions, which he Suffer'd, a continual Exerciſe of Pennance, that, *Whilſt he Converted others, he himſelf might not be a Caſt-away*: And People, who dare not think themſelves neer ſo Holy as Saint *Paul*, ſhall Believe they do not ſtand in need of, but may, without any danger, paſs by the Exerciſes of Mortification? Were the Saints more Frail than we are? Did they pretend to have any other Recompenſe? Did they follow any other Guide, or ſerve any other Maſter? And is our Life, conformable to that of the Saints, whoſe Life was a continual Mortification?

And

And can we, without the Exerciſe of Pennance, call our ſelves the Diſciples of JESUS CHRIST? If any one will come after me, ſaid our moſt loving Saviour, let him Renounce himſelf, and take up his Croſs and carry it Daily. *June* and *Decemb.*

True Mortification is inſeparable from real Piety; not only becauſe no Vertue can long ſubſiſt without a generous and conſtant Mortification, but alſo becauſe without Mortification, there is no true Vertue.

We have great reaſon to diſtruſt our ſelves, both in the frequent uſage of the Sacraments, and in the Exerciſe of Piety, and the Practice of good Works: Every thing is to be ſuſpected in People that are but little us'd to Mortification, and whoſe Paſſions are always ſtrong and violent.

It ſeems that it is not the Pain which diſcourages, but the Motive: For what do not Men ſuffer in the Service of the World? Alas! If God ſhou'd exact from his Servants, all that the World exacts, I much queſtion whether he wou'd find many Servants or no. What violence do not Men Daily do themſelves to pleaſe ſuch as they are oblig'd by Intereſt not to Diſpleaſe? What Mortification more grievous, and leſs interrupted, than that of a Man, aſſiduous in his buſineſs, whether a Courtier, or a Merchant, a Souldier, or a Student? And yet they are not Diſcourag'd, but ſeem content amidſt all their Sufferings: But If Men be to do themſelves the leaſt violence for God, every thing is diſheartning, the Yoke of the Lord is unſupportable,

*June and Decemb.*

portable, Vertue frightens them, they take a Loathing, and loſe all Courage at the very thought of Mortification. Alas! We ſhall have a far different ſenſe of things at the Hour of our Deaths.

The Image of JESUS CHRIST upon the Croſs will then be preſented to us; and the ſight of this Croſs muſt needs have a contrary effect upon us; ſince it will reproach us for our Delicacy and our Niceneſs, and augment the ſenſible grief we ſhall have at the laſt Hour, for having lead ſo Soft and Senſual a Life; for not having done Pennance and Mortifi'd our ſelves.

The Crucifix is preſented at the hour of Death to all Dying Perſons; but my God, do all theſe Perſons receive any Comfort at the hour of their Deaths, by holding that Crucifix? Is it poſſible, Lord, that Mortification, which you have ſo much ſweetned, ſhou'd never become rude and inſupportable, but when Men ſuffer it after your Example, and for Love of you? Oh my God! What wou'd it be, if you exacted from your Servants, all that the World exacts from thoſe who ſerve it? What wou'd it be, if to be Sav'd, it were neceſſary to do and ſuffer all that Men in the World do and ſuffer to Deſtroy themſelves? And yet! You require leſs then the World do's exact, leſs then we either do or ſuffer in the Service of the World, and yet ſhall I refuſe to do and and ſuffer, what is neceſſary for my Salvation, what I have deſerv'd for my Sins, what all thoſe who are in Heaven, have done in Imitation

of

of you? * *Far be it from me to Glory in any thing ſave in the Croſs of our Lord* JESUS CHRIST, *through whom the World is Crucifi'd to me, and I to the World.*

* Abſit mihi gloriari niſi in Cruce Domini noſtri Jeſu Chriſti per quem mihi mundus Crucifixus eſt, & ego mundo.

## II. Point.

### *What ought to be the Fruits of this Repentance.*

*June* and *Decemb.*

CONSIDER that by the Fruits of Pennance is underſtood not only the Mortification of the Body, but principally the ſubduing of the Paſſions, and the Reformation of Manners: Theſe are properly the Fruits, which God expects from our Contrition and Repentance: By theſe marks it may be known, whether we make a good uſe of the Sacraments; whether we do truly grieve for our Sins, and whether we are Faithful managers of the Grace which God has given us.

The practices of Devotion, the frequent uſe of the Sacraments, and the Exerciſe of good Works, are powerful means to make Men become Perfect: But ſo long as, with theſe powerful means, they have ſtill the ſame Paſſions; they are ſtill equally Proud, Impatient, Fretful, Envious, Uneaſie, Angry, Unmortifi'd, and full of Self-Love, can theſe pretended Exerciſes of Piety be reckon'd upon with any manner of reaſon? The

*June and Decemb.*

The uſe of Bodily Mortification, is an Exerciſe of Pennance; but this Pennance muſt bring forth Fruit; and this Fruit conſiſts in repairing the diſorders of our Paſſions, in ſuppreſſing our bad Inclinations, and the irregularities of Self-Love.

What do's it ſignifie to Confeſs Faults ſo often, if a Man do's not in a Year amend one of the Faults he had Confeſs'd? It is not enuff to deteſt one's Sins: But we muſt alſo make a Reſolution never to commit any more of them: But can this very Reſolution, think you, be ſincere, if it be not accompani'd with a will to fly the leaſt occaſion of Sinning? The effect of this will, is properly, what we call the Fruit of Pennance: But in good earneſt, if we know not the efficacy of the Sacrament of Pennance but by it's Fruits, we ſee we ſhou'd have but a very mean conceit of it. It is to be fear'd, leaſt by our habitual negligence in the uſe of this Sacrament, and chiefly for want of Contrition, we profit little by it, and our Evils become more incurable.

A Religious Life is a continual Exerciſe of Pennance: But is there no danger that it may prove ineffectual? And what an unhappineſs wou'd it be for a Religious Perſon, to have done Pennance ſo long to no effect? And what Fruit can a Religious Perſon, little Mortified, and full of the Spirit of the World, living in Luke-warmneſs and Relaxation, gather from his Pennance? They are much in the wrong, who will not taſt of the Fruits of the Croſs they carry; they

they wou'd not ſuffer the more; on the contrary, they wou'd ſuffer the leſs, becauſe theſe Fruits are full of true Sweetneſs and Content. *June* and *Decemb.*

Is it not true, that every one has a great deal to ſuffer during this Life? We find Croſſes every where; thoſe who Live moſt at their eaſe are not exempt: Let us at leaſt ſuffer with Patience, let us joyn our Sufferings to thoſe of JESUS CHRIST, we ſhall not Suffer the more, and our Suffering will not be Fruitleſs.

The conſtant Exerciſe of Mortification, is alſo another Fruit of Pennance: My God, what Fruit may not a Man draw from this Exerciſe of Mortification? There is nothing which may not furniſh us with an occaſion of contradicting our Natural Inclinations; there is no time nor place that is not proper to Mortifie one's ſelf, without being extravagant: O what advantage may one, who truly Loves JESUS CHRIST, make by theſe little occaſions! If one has a great mind to look, or ſpeak in ſome certain circumſtances, how profitably may he then caſt down his Eyes, or hold his Peace? A Word, ſpoke to the purpoſe, a little Raillery wittily expreſs'd, may gain a Man eſteem in converſation; but the omiſſion of it may be a grateful Sacrifice to God: There is hardly an Hour of the Day, that a Man meets not with a ſubject of Mortification; whether a Man ſits, or ſtands he'll hardly fail to find ſome way to incommode himſelf, without making it appear: Inſine, the par-

*June and Decemb.*

ticular inconveniences of Place, Time, and Persons, which Men ſuffer in ſuch a manner as to let People think they are not ſenſible of them, are it's True, little occaſions of Mortifying one's ſelf; but yet the Mortifications in theſe little occaſions, are not little; they are of high Merit: And it may be ſayd, that the greateſt Graces, and the moſt ſublime Sanctity commonly depend upon the generoſity Men ſhew in Mortifying themſelves conſtantly on theſe little occaſions. Not to diſpenſe with one's ſelf in any thing of the Duties of the Community, to obſerve it's Rules exactly, and to conform in all things to the Common way of Living, without any regard to one's own Inclinations, Employments, or Age, are Precious Fruits of Mortification; ſo much the more conſiderable, as they are leſs Subject to Vanity, and more conformable to the Spirit of JESUS CHRIST.

Theſe are the true Fruits of Pennance; and to ſpeak Truth, what hinders us from bringing forth a great deal of this Fruit? But there is yet another, and a more neceſſary kind of Fruit of Pennance, and without which, all others will ſignifie but very little in order to Eternity; and this is the Reformation of Manners, and the Overcoming our Predominant Paſſion. Let us obſerve which of our Paſſions has the chief ſway over us, and the habit which influences our Actions; our moſt ordinary and Familiar Sin, and which is, in ſome manner, the Source of all the reſt, the Cauſe of all the falſe

Maxims

Maxims we frame to our ſelves in matters of Conſcience. We may be Strangers to all other Vices; but our proper Character is to be taken from the prevailing Paſſion, the Paſſion that Lord's it over us. The Fruit of a true Converſion, is to cut off the Vice, which reign's in us; to deteſt, with a Pious horrour, this imperious, domineering Paſſion, to the end we may afterwards fight againſt it continually, and without intermiſſion. This Victory alone will ſecure us againſt the ſtrongeſt Temptation of the Enemy: We eaſily make War againſt our other Vices, but this is commonly ſpar'd, and this is the reaſon we reap but little Fruit by our Pennance. *June* and *Decemb.*

Ah my God! What do we wait for? Or what is the Reaſon that we do not bring forth Fruit? You cultivate us with ſo much care, that we are, as it were, Tranſplanted into a Land, water'd not only with your Tears, but alſo with your Blood. How long ſhall we lead ſo unfruitful Lives? What advantage will it be to us, to bring forth nothing but Thorns? We feel their Points, their Prickles; and becauſe we eſtrange our ſelves from your Croſs, we reap no Fruit from our Labours. I am reſolv'd, Lord, not to omit any thing, that may make me lead a leſs barren Life; I can do nothing without your Grace, and with that I can do all things; and ſince you yet give me time to Repent, permit me no longer to abuſe this time; ſince from this moment I am reſolv'd to bring forth Fruits worthy of Repentance.

*June* and *Decemb.*

# THE THIRD MEDITATION.

## UPON

## The thoughts which we shall have at the hour of Death.

See the Third Meditation of the Month of *January* and *July*. Page. 67.

# Chriſtian Reflections.

## WHICH

## *May ſerve for Subjects of Conſideration for every Day of Retreat.*

*Of Salvation.*

ARE we fully perſwaded of the Truths of our Religion? If we do not really Believe them, it may be ſayd, we do too much: But if we do really Believe what we Profeſs to Believe, it is certain we do too little: Dare we ſay that the Saints have done too much? They who at the end of their Lives, when Men judge ſo rightly of things, did extreamly grieve, they had done no more? And yet what difference is there between their Lives and ours? To ſpeak ſincerely, do we go the ſame way? Do we govern our ſelves by the ſame Maxims? And yet notwithſtanding all of us pretend to arrive at the ſame place. Ah, my God! Have we not reaſon to Believe, we go Aſtray? We acknowledge that the Saints were Wiſe in Living Conformable to what they Believ'd: Do's our Conduct agree with our Belief? Shall we be, at the hour of our Deaths, well ſatisfied for having Liv'd as we do?

*Of the importance of Salvation.*

What is it that we are now about? We talk much of Salvation, of our Souls, and of Eternity. Is it true indeed that I am come into the World for no other end, but to work out my Salvation? Is it certain that if I miscarry in this, I am undone, and have lost all, tho' I shou'd have gain'd the whole World? Is it very true, and do I in good earnest Believe, that the Affair of my Salvation is the most important of all affairs? That, properly speaking, it is my only affair; the affair, which alone requir's all my application, and which alone depends upon my application? If we do not Believe this, we are irrecoverably lost; and if we do Believe it, do we not deserve to be severely punish'd for an indifference, which degenerats into a formal contempt of our Salvation? For to be sincere, have we apply'd our selves much to this great affair? Or do's this important affair take up much of our time? And since we apply our selves so little to it, upon what ground do we hope to succeed in it? We, who wou'd conclude that a Man wou'd certainly ruin his Temporal affairs, if he did not apply himself to them better, than we do apply our selves to this important affair, this difficult affair of our Salvation.

*Of Mens indifference about the business of their Salvatiõ.*

We are so indifferent in the affair of our Salvation, that there are few Men, who will not own, that of all the affairs we have upon our Hands, this of Eternity is that, which we most neglect, and take least to Heart. What can be the cause of this frightful indifference for our Salvation? God has given

given us our whole Life to think of it; and he has judg'd that we cou'd not have leſs time to ſucceed in it. Perhaps our Death is near at Hand: But to be juſt and ſincere, what part of our Age have we employ'd in this moſt important affair? How many Years, how many Days, nay how many Hours of our Life, have we conſecrated and ſet a part for it? Have we the confidence to reckon upon the Moments which we ſpend in the Church with ſo little Reſpect, and in voluntary Diſtractions? Alas! Have we there much advanc'd the buſineſs of our Salvation? Or dare we reckon the little time we have ſpent in our Prayers, without Attention, in Confeſſions, without grief and without Amendment; in Communions, without Fruit, and in a few good Works, which we have either loſt by motives that were purely Natural, or corrupted by Evil one's.

As full of Superfluous cares, and as buſie as Men are in their Temporal affairs, how ſmall a Portion of their time do they allow for the affair of their Salvation? And yet they grudge and complain, as one may ſay, even of that little time, which they do allow: What reaſon can we give for ſo unreaſonable a Conduct, unleſs it be, that we want Faith in this Point? For if we do really Believe, that this is the concern of God, of Eternity, of an infinit Happineſs, of an unhappineſs that includes, nay that ſurpaſſes all others; if we Believe, as we often ſay, that one cannot at the ſame time mind Heaven and Earth, that time is ſhort, and that

Death ſteals and preſſes upon us, that every Moment may be our laſt; if we Believe that it is our buſineſs, our only buſineſs to think of our Salvation; that, provided we do but ſecure this, it is no great matter if we miſcarry in all the reſt; that by neglecting our Souls, we loſe all, even Temporal things; that, by applying our ſelves wholly to the Salvation of our Souls, we loſe nothing, not even Temporal goods; if we really Believ'd all theſe things, how cou'd we poſſibly take care of any other thing but of our Salvation only?

*Of the falſe pretences of the Men of the World about the buſineſs of their Salvation.*

It is ſtrange that People, who Live in the World, and ſhew ſo much Wit and Judgement in their Temporal affairs, ſhou'd not perceive their falſe way of reaſoning. When they are adviſ'd to think and Labour in the Work of their Salvation, they preſently ſet before our Eyes the great difficulty of ſaving one's ſelf in the World; they make ſuch lively, and ſuch moving repreſentations of the corruption of the Age; they are ſo eloquent upon the inevitable dangers that Men run in it, that we eaſily agree with them, that there is not leſs need of an heroic Vertue for thoſe who Live in the World, than for thoſe who Live in Religious Houſes: But when a Man ſpeaks to them of the neceſſity of Conquering one's ſelf in order to Salvation; of Mortifying one's Paſſions, and of following the Examples of JESUS CHRIST, and the Saints; then they anſwer us, that the practice of thoſe Vertues is not fit or Convenient for them; that it is not proper for their

their circumſtances; that their State of Life do's not exact from them ſo difficult a Sacrifice, and that none but Religious Perſons can lead a Regular Life; a Life Conformable to the Maxims of JESUS CHRIST. We muſt therefore hence conclude, either, that Salvation is not for the Men of the World, which wou'd be one of the greateſt and moſt criminal Errors; or elſe, that the Men of the World do in reality renounce their Salvation.

*How eaſie it is for every Man to Save himſelf.*

God might have put us all under a neceſſity of always holding a ſteddy courſe towards him, and oblig'd us never to have gon aſtray from our End; but then he muſt have taken from us our Liberty. When a Man thinks of the great number of thoſe who loſe themſelves, he wou'd gladly be under the happy neceſſity of working out his Salvation, and freed from the fear of being Damn'd. But how cou'd God have made us more ſure of our Eternal Salvation, than by putting it into our own Hands? And what! Becauſe he has made me maſter of my Eternal Lot, maſter of my everlaſting Happineſs, of my Eternity, muſt I therefore be the leſs happy? Muſt my Salvation be the more uncertain? And muſt I run a greater riske of Deſtroying my ſelf? If my Salvation depended on the beſt of my Friends, I ſhou'd have ſome reaſon to fear; but it depends upon my ſelf, together with the aſſiſtance of Grace, which will never be wanting to me; and this is indeed the principal cauſe of my Deſtruc-

on. O my God, if I do not work out my Salvation, ſince it is in my own power, do I not deſerve a judgment without Mercy, and a Puniſhment without End?

*Of the ill uſe of the means of our Salvation.*

Can we think of the ſmall Fruit which we gather from ſo powerful means, of our contempt of ſo many Graces, which we make uſeleſs, without being afraid, as in good reaſon we ought to be, that it may be ſayd to us, * God has done you the favour to make you be Born within the Pale of the Church, to tranſplant you, as one may ſay, into the fruitful field of Religion, into ground cultivated by the labour, and water'd with the Sweat, nay with the Blood of a God-Man. What means, what ſuccours have we not reciev'd to enable us to attain to the Perfection of our State, and to lead a Life fruitful in good Works? But becauſe we have hetherto render'd theſe means ineffectual, and alſo the ſuccours that were moſt proper to make us bring forth a hundred fold, ought we not to apprehend, that it will be ſayd to us; * This has already happen'd to *Syna*, and to almoſt all the *Eaſtern* Countries, notwithſtanding that they were the Cradle, if one may ſay ſo, of Chriſtianity; this has alſo happen'd in theſe latter times to the *Northen* Provinces, and to unhappy *England*: Theſe People, who were formerly very good Chriſtians, and who can reckon among their Anceſtors ſo many great Saints, are themſelves at laſt cut off from the Flock of CHRIST, whilſt *Indians*, and *Japonians*, and a hundred other Barbarous Nations, have

* *To you it behoved us firſt to ſpeak the Word of God:* Act c. 13 v. 46.

* Vobis opertebat primum loqui verbum Dei?

* *not becauſe you repel it, and judge your ſelves unworthy of Eternal Life: behold we turn to the Gentils.* *Ibid.*

* Sed quoniam repellitis illud & indignos vos judicatis eternæ vitæ, ecce convertimur adgentes?

have enter'd into the Boſom of the Church, and have in this new World made the Fervour and Piety of the Primitive Chriſtians revive, not only imitating, but even equalizing the courage and generoſity of the greateſt Martyrs.

Whence comes it to paſs that we Believe, it ſeems eaſie enuff, the Myſteries which appear to be above our Underſtanding, which ſeem moſt to ſhock our Reaſon, as the Myſtery of the Trinity, of the Incarnation, and others? It is becauſe this ſhock's not our Paſſions. But, my God! Do we as eaſily Believe all the other Truths of the Goſpel, ſelf Denyal, Contempt of the World, and Love of Humiliations and Poverty? And yet both the one and the other are equally grounded upon the infallibility of thy Word: For it is not leſs true, that we ſhall never enter into the Kingdome of Heaven, if we do not do our ſelves Violence, and Love our Enemies, than that we ſhall not enter into Heaven unleſs we be Baptiz'd; and ſtill Men count much upon Faith; for every one pretends to be a Faithful Believer, but they are not aware that their Faith is but a Dead Faith; and is there not danger to confound the knowledge of what we ought to Believe, with that which is call'd the true Chriſtian Faith, which is always Fruitful in good works, and without which there can be no Vertue? *Of the want of Faith.*

We Believe that there is a Hell; that there are Fires and dreadful Torments in that Hell; that one ſingle Mortal Sin, is ſufficient to Damn a Soul to Eternal Pains; *Of the Thoughts of Hell.*

and yet have we much abhorrence for a Mortal Sin? Is it, that we are not afraid of Fire and Eternal Torments? Or is it, that we do not Believe these Torments? We do Believe them: For else why shou'd we tremble at the very thoughts of Hell? But if the thought only of Hell makes us tremble, what shall we do when we come to suffer actually all the Torments of Hell? But how great shall our grief be then, and our despair, for not having avoided this Hell, of which in our Life time the very thoughts alone had often made us tremble?

*Of an unhappy Eternity.*

There is much talk of an unhappy Eternity; but do we rightly understand what this Eternity is? By often hearing it spoken of, we insensibly accustome our selves to the Word and to it's Signification; and thence it comes to pass, that we are so little mov'd at it: A Soul accustom'd to the continual vicissitude, or change of Seasons, and of Times, Days, Months and Years; amus'd, by this variety, and diverted by this novelty, finds it self, in a Moment, in that Abyss of Eternity: And it has, in that instant, all that it will have in Eternity it self; and finds it self in that State, in that place, where it will remain during all Eternity. A Soul will then suffer, from the very first Moment, all that it is to suffer during that unhappy Eternity; it suffers, as one may say, every Moment all that can be suffer'd in Eternity.

An unhappy Eternity is, to speak properly, a State wherein all the differrences of Time

Time do meet in one, to make a Soul unhappy: It is, as one may ſay, a Globe of an infinite weight, which preſſes all upon an indiviſible Point; it is a duration, which ſhall have no End. O God! To ſuffer all the Torments imaginable! All the Torments that God can make Man ſuffer! And to ſuffer theſe Torments altogether, all at once, and for ever, without any Hopes, ever to ſee them End, ever to ſee themſelves eas'd, or ever to be accuſtom'd to bear them, O God, what Puniſhment! If, after ſo many Millions of Ages as there have been Minutes ſince the World began, the Pains of the Damn'd ſhou'd ceaſe, yet wou'd the Sinner be inexcuſable, tho' his folly wou'd be leſs intolerable: But for one only, criminal Thought, a Million of Ages of Fire and Flames; for a Sin of one Moment, a Hell of a hundred thouſand Millions of Years! O God what equality is this! One might have Patience, were theſe Pains but to end at laſt, how dreadful ſoever their duration might be; but an Eternity to ſuffer, and to burn Eternally, and never to be eas'd for ever; and ever, to burn, and to be aſſur'd to burn for ever: Good God! How very dreadful, and how terrible is all this!

Imagine to your ſelf, that a Man Condem'd to ſuffer all the Torments of Hell, till he ſhou'd have drown'd the whole Univerſe with his Tears, and yet to ſhed but one Tear in a thouſand Years: Alas! *Cain*, by this time, wou'd have ſhed but five or

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ſix Tears! What a dreadful duration of Time muſt he yet wait, if he were to fill this Chamber? But what wou'd it be, if he were to pour out enuff to drown this Houſe, enuff to make many great Rivers? What will it be, if he muſt wait till he has ſhed enuff to fill up all the place now poſſeſs'd by the Sea, to drown all the World, to fill up the immenſe ſpace that is between Heaven and Earth? The thoughts of this makes a Man tremble, and his Wit is loſt and confounded in this frightful extent of Time; and yet how dreadful and inconceivable ſoever this duration is, it do's not neer make up Eternity; ſince after all that length of Time, Eternity remains ſtill whole and entire; and there will come a Time when a Damn'd Soul will be able to ſay, that if he had ſhed but one ſingle Tear for every thouſand Years ſince he was in Torments, he ſhou'd long ago have drown'd the whole Univerſe, and quite fill'd up this prodigious ſpace we now behold; and yet there wou'd ſtill remain behind a whole Eternity to ſuffer; and his unhappy Eternity wou'd not be one Moment diminiſh'd: But what's moſt ſtrange and wonderful is, that notwithſtanding all this, we ſhou'd find a guſt, a ſatisfaction in Vanity, and think it a Pleaſure to Sin, and that Sin ſhou'd have any Charmes.

Ah! my God, my good Maſter, my moſt amiable Redeemer, do not Damn me; or, to ſpeak more properly, permit me not to Damn my ſelf; for you will never Damn me,

me, till I ſhall have firſt freely renounc'd, by my Diſobedience and my Crimes, that happy Eternity you have prepar'd for me: Am I an Object worthy of ſo much Wrath, of ſo long and ſo cruel a Vengeance? Let us, let us, our ſelves, do all that we ought to do to be Sav'd; ſince it is in our own power, let us Save our ſelves, tho' the reſt of the World ſhou'd all Periſh. This is a fearful Truth, but yet how ever dreadful it be, it is ſtill a Truth, thoſe Torments, that Eternity, are ſomething incomprehenſible; but it is yet more difficult, to comprehend how the Life of a Sinner can be reconcil'd with the Belief of a Hell: Alas! Say ſome, Men have not courage to think of Hell. It is true, the thought of Hell makes the moſt reſolute, and the greateſt Saints to quake and tremble: But do's not our not thinking of it hinder it from being at all, or from being leſs terrible? Or make us have leſs cauſe to fear our being Damn'd?

The Flames and Torments of Hell are for certain moſt dreadful things; but yet nevertheleſs all that is but a ſmall thing, ſays a Servant of God, in compariſon of the Regret we ſhall have in the conſideration of the Time paſt, and of the ill uſe we have made of that Time. Our Minds will be for ever imploy'd in repreſenting to us, to the Life, the vanity of thoſe Objects, which averted us from God; and how eaſily we might have Sav'd our ſelves: It was very eaſie to have Confeſs'd the Sin, and to have avoided the Occaſion: I enjoy'd after my Fall

Fall, many Years of Health; and why did I wait for the hour of my Death? Where was my wits? I that ſeem'd a Man of prudence, and paſs'd for a judicious Perſon, able to give good Counſel to others; I needed not to have done any more, than what ſuch or ſuch an one did; it was in my own power to have done it; I had ſeveral times thought and even reſolv'd to have done it; but yet I did it not: Oh! That I had made theſe reflections when I was in a condition to have been the better for them! Alas, I did make them, but I reap'd no Benefit by them; it was only my own fault that I was not a Saint: Ah, If I had been! But I am not; I am Damn'd.

*Of the pretended Converſion of Imperfect Chriſtians.*

Perſons Conſecrated to God, are commonly but little mov'd with what is ſaid of the neceſſity there is of an immediate Converſion; becauſe it ſeems they look upon themſelves as Converted already, from the time they put themſelves, by entring into Religion, under a more ſtrict obligation of Converting themſelves perfectly: But they do not perceive that it is not ſo eaſie to change Manners as the State of one's Life; that a new form of Habit is not able to ſtifle our Paſſions, and Vicious Inclinations; this outward Change, this new way of Life ſtrikes the Mind at firſt, and amuſes, as one may ſay, the Paſſions; which are as it were ſtop'd in their career, and their force broken by this novelty: Grace, which then moſt abounds, makes the moſt Imperfect ſenſible of it's effects; they have ſome good deſires, and

and find almoſt no difficulty in theſe happy beginings: And this it is, which often Deceives thoſe who begin to ſerve God in Religion: They take for an effect of Grace, that which commonly is but the effect of the Change of their Condition, and new State of Life: Charm'd with the progreſs, they fancy themſelves to have made in theſe firſt proceedings, they Believe that all is done; that there is nothing more to fear, and they lull themſelves a Sleep in this falſe Security: But, at laſt, when the Grace of this Novelty is paſt, and they are accuſtom'd to this new form of Life, the Paſſions, finding nothing more to amuſe them, break out with ſo much the greater Violence as they have been the longer kept hid and reſtrain'd: Then the former Inclinations are renew'd, and the Natural temper return's; and as they diſtruſt nothing, it is eaſie to judge, how great a Deſtruction, if one may ſpeak ſo, ſuch dangerous Enemies make in a Soul that is not upon it's garde. And hence it comes to paſs, that after three or four Years in Religion, People find themſelves leſs Mortifi'd perhaps, and more ſenſible of Pleaſures, more greedy of Honours, more Imperfect, and leſs ſenſible of the truths of the Goſpel, and of Grace, than they were the firſt Day of their Converſion.

*Of the falſe notion Men have of Vertue.*

There is for certain ſome Vertue amongſt the great croud of Chriſtians in our Days; but yet we may ſay that it is very much Degenerated from that of the Primitive Chriſtians:

Christians. It is a Vertue which knows how to be civil and sociable; that is to say, which takes as much of the Service of God as is necessary to gain it self a Reputation, and get an esteem in the World; a Vertue which always finds some accomodation between the Maxims of JESUS CHRIST, and the Maxims of the World; and therefore it is openly condemn'd by JESUS CHRIST himself, and has indeed nothing but the bare name of Vertue. My God, how much are these sort of People, these half Devotes to be pitied? They wou'd fain please at the same time both God and Men; but they never please Men, and always displease God. We must know how to Live, say they; that is, we must have an easie, indulgent and commodious Vertue, which they call the Vertue of good Sense: As if there cou'd be any good Sense, but with respect to the Spirit and Maxims of our Saviour. My God, how opposit is this pretended Vertue to the Spirit of the Gospel? And how much harm do's it do to a vast number of People? Why, say they, shou'd one always be so reserv'd, so recollected, so exact, and so modest in company? A Man must be like other Men. It is true, a Man must be a Man; but he must also remember, that he is a Christian, an Ecclesiastick, a Religious Person.

*Of the small progress Men make in Vertue.*

There is no body dares say, or wou'd be willing to have it be Believ'd, that after ten Years spent in the study of Human Sciences, he shou'd esteem himself happy, if he did but know as much of them, as he had learn'd in-

in the first six Months; and yet there are some, who make Profession of Piety, that is to say, whose principal employment is to become perfect, who notwithstanding, after ten, and twenty Years of Study, and Exercise in the sublime Science of Salvation, are not asham'd to say, nor much concern'd, to have it be Believ'd, that they shou'd reckon themselves Happy, if they were but as Fervent, as Mortified, and as Holy, as they were after the first six Months of their Conversion. It is true, they endeavour, as one may say, to put the thoughts of these things out of their Heads, by outward Distractions, and by the insipid Pleasures of a lazy, sluggish Life; but early or late, those People will come to the end of their Lives; and what, alas, must be their thoughts at the hour of their Deaths?

*Of the Vertue proper for every ones State and Condition.*

It wou'd be great imprudence, and a gross errour in the Directours of Souls, to desire to bring all the World, indifferently and by the same Methods to the same degree of Perfection: * There are many mansions, many different places of abode, some higher, some lower in the Kingdom of Heaven; and tho' all, who are in the Heavenly *Jerusalem*, are fully satisfied, and perfectly happy, yet they are not all alike exalted: There are Seraphins, and there are Angels; and those who are not perhaps among the Apostles, the Martyrs, and the Virgins, may be at least plac'd among the Penitents. * As all receive not the same measure of Grace in this Life; so all have not the same degree of

* Mansiones multæ sunt in regno Patris mei.

* Divisiones gratiarum sunt.

of Glory in the next. But it is not a leſs dangerous Errour, to be willing, upon this principle, to limit and confine one's deſires and deſigns to an indifferent State of Vertue, altho' we ſhou'd have receiv'd from God very particular Graces, or ſhou'd have been call'd to a State of Life, which requires a high Perfection. It is true, that all cannot be equally Perfect; but all are call'd to be Holy; and none will ever become Holy, but by acquiring the Vertues which are proper for the State whereunto they are call'd. All even of the ſame State of Life are not call'd to the ſame Perfection; but the more Perfect the State of Life is, the more alſo is the Man oblig'd to Perfection. An indifferent Vertue, may be ſufficient for a Secular, but it wou'd not be ſufficient for a Religious Perſon: And thoſe who are call'd to an Apoſtolical Function, are indiſpenſably oblig'd to a more Sublime Vertue than others; and do's not God exact a much greater Sanctity from Prieſts, than from ſuch as are not Prieſts?

*Of the World.* One cannot but pity Secular and Worldly Men, when they ſtrive to make us believe, that they are unhappy; altho' they ſhou'd not acquaint us, when at liberty to ſpeak without Diſſimulation, with all their troubles and misfortunes; to ſee what kind of People the World is compos'd of, and what are the ſervices it exacts from it's admirers, wou'd be enuff to convince us, that none can be more unhappy than they: The World is made up of ſuch as Loving none but themſelves,

ſelves, acknowledge no other Law, as one may ſay, more inviolable, than that of their own Intereſt and their Pleaſures: It is a confus'd heap of Perſons, of differrent Characters, and of differrent Guſtos; of which every one, full of himſelf, approves of nothing but what he eſteems; and he eſteems nothing, but what pleaſes him. One Man is puffed up with the vanity of a Name, which he diſhonours by his Conduct, ſays a great Servant of God; another prides himſelf in a fine ſuit of Cloaths, which he has not paid for; this Man aſſum's to himſelf the honour due to another Man's Merit; that Man pines away with grief, becauſe his pretended Merit is not ſufficiently Honour'd; others there are, who loſe their Sleep to acquire Riches they know not what to do with, and of which they will not make any manner of uſe: After they have waſted their Health in acquiring of Riches, they muſt be forc'd to conſume their Wealth to recover their Health. A Man muſt be continually upon his garde againſt the ſurprizes of one that is jealous of him, of his Rival, of his Enemy; that is to ſay, he diſtruſts all Man-kind; for it is a very rare thing to find in the World a True and Perfect Friend.

How much loſt Labour is there in the World? Oftentimes when you intend beſt, and Labour moſt, if the thing do's not ſucceed, you will have no thanks for your Pains; you may labour much, and endure a great deal, for many whole Years together, without being taken notice of; and yet if but one

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ſingle Fault be perceiv'd, your Maſter will preſently chide, and fall into Paſſion, you are cry'd out againſt, turn'd off, and no longer valu'd. In the World it is not enuff to ſerve well and do much; but over and above that, it is neceſſary to pleaſe, and that which is neceſſary to pleaſe, is not always in our power: But that which is yet more ſtrange is, that not to diſpleaſe the World, a Man muſt hide the deſign he has to pleaſe it. It conſiders none but thoſe who do nothing for it: You are indeed buſied to much purpoſe in taking pains for the World, ſince if the World perceives your Labour is to gain it, it will hold it ſelf freed and diſcharg'd from that, or any return your ſervices might otherwiſe ſeem to deſerve: Inſomuch that the World do's, not only, not give any thing to thoſe, who do not ſufficiently ſtudy to pleaſe it, but alſo refuſes every thing to thoſe, who ſeem over-buſie in it's Service.

Men believe they have Friends in the World, whilſt all things ſmile on them, whilſt they have power, and may be uſeful to many; but if they happen to be unfortunate, diſgrac'd, and no longer in a Condition to oblige, theſe pretended Friends with draw, they conſider you no more, all their affection is for him that takes your Place; the great Lord, whoſe Slave you in a manner were, will reckon he has paid you very liberally for all your Services, if in your laſt fit of Sickneſs he did but ſend a Foot-Man to bring him an account of your Health.

What

What pains do not Men take to diſtinguiſh themſelves? But what means can be found, to make a Man ſucceed among ſo great a croud of People, who all believe themſelves moſt particularly excellent, and deſerving? You pretend that the World admires you, ſays that Holy Man we have cited, and do you not know that Men of Underſtanding admire nothing? And that Idiots do not even commend things, which are really worthy of admiration, becauſe they are above their Capacity and Comprehenſion? Beſides, that which to you ſeems moſt admirable in your ſelf, appears but very indifferent to all thoſe, who know you: There are few People, who do not Believe they have as much Wit, as much Vertue, and as many Accompliſhments as you: But they are miſtaken ſay you; they, on the contrary ſay, that you flatter your ſelf, and that it is you, not they, that are miſtaken.

It is true, that ſometimes Men in the World are very liberal of their Commendations, becauſe they expect the ſame return; but let us a little reflect upon what is commonly done in this Life, and we ſhall find that thoſe great marks of Eſteem and extraordinary Praiſes, are the very ſame, which have a thouſand times been given, and which we our ſelves Daily give to Perſons, of whom, in reality, we make but a very ſmall account. Have we not heard many Perſons commended to their Faces, of whom a thouſand diſadvantagious things have been ſaid as ſoon as their Backs were turn'd, and

Men

Men at liberty to ſpeak their real thoughts? Are we not of all Men the greateſt Fools, if we believe our ſelves the only Perſons, that are really and in good earneſt commended; and that thoſe fine things, which are ſaid, are ſincerely meant to us, and but in raillery to others; or elſe, are at the beſt but ſpoken to acquit themſelves of a duty of Civility, which cuſtom has almoſt made neceſſary? Many in the World believe that they are admir'd, whilſt, on the contrary, they are in reality laugh'd at, or pitied. They imagine, that Men take notice of every thing they do to make themſelves remarkable; but are we to learn that every Man thinks but of himſelf and is buſied and concern'd for no body elſe? That he, whom you believe to be your admirer, is himſelf perſwaded that he is valu'd, and admir'd by you?

Add to all this the mortal grief and real diſpleaſures, which Men in the World are continually under, and what notwithſtanding they are oblig'd to diſſemble. How often are Men, to keep up their Credit and Reputation in the World, forc'd to make their expences exceed their comings in; and, tho' in a manner reduc'd to want neceſſaries, yet dare not retrench from their exceſſes and extravagances? They have a hundred occaſions to Weep and yet muſt ſeem to Smile: Infine, the World is full of nothing but Diſſimulation, Grimace, and Affliction; and it is certain that he paſſes for the happieſt

Man

Man in the World, who beſt knows how to diſſemble his Griefs and Diſquiets.

It is commonly the love of Liberty which induces the Men of the World to chooſe this State of Life; and yet to be ſincere, can any People be imagin'd more ſubjected, more conſtrain'd, and more depending, than Men of the World? It is not only in an Army, that they ſuffer much and are tormented: What racks and tortures both in Mind and Body, do they not Daily encounter in all the ſeveral other States of Life, by being forc'd to depend upon the humour and caprice of ſo many different Perſons?

The Men of the World have indeed reaſon to ſay, that their State of Life is of all others the moſt troubleſom and uneaſie; but yet it is in their own power to make it the moſt Meritorious and moſt Profitable; they need not ſuffer as much as they do, to become very great Saints, which they may be if they will but make a Vertue of their ſufferings, and ſuffer all for God's ſake: Yes my God it is very true; and I do not know, whether the greateſt part of thoſe, who lead the lives of Chriſtians, wou'd not find this Yoke inſupportable, if to pleaſe thee they were oblig'd to do all that the World exacts from it's Servants and Adorers. The the Men of the World are much in the wrong, for not making uſe of the means they have to become great Saints; their own State of Life, without going any farther, wou'd furniſh them, if they did but make a right uſe on't, with a ſufficient fund

to raiſe a great ſtock of Merits: They are conſtantly complaining of the Vanity of the Age; and yet, which is very ſtrange, they are Daily multiplying the Chains that faſten them to the World, and are every Day more and more obſtinate in the purſuit of it's Vanities.

*Of Confidence in the Merits of Chriſt.*

It is a great ground of Confidence and Comfort, to think that the Merits of JESUS CHRIST, and the Satisfaction he has made, are for us: So that how incurable ſoever our wounds ſeem to be, we have at hand, a Remedy of greater force than the Evil: How immenſe ſoever our Debts appear, altho' we were more indebted than we are, to the Juſtice of God, we ſhou'd ſtill be able to pay it; ſince we find in the Satisfactions of our Saviour, and the Price of his Blood, a Fund, which infinitly ſurpaſſes all our Debts. His Satisfactions, of which he himſelf has no need, will become ours, if we do but apply them to our ſelves: And it is certain that altho' we ſhou'd have been ſo unhappy as to have committed the moſt horrid Crimes, and ſaw the moſt terrible effects of the Wrath of God ready to fall upon us, yet provided we cou'd have but a ſincere Confidence in the Satisfactions of our Saviour, and in that diſpoſition, offer them up to you, my God, we ſhou'd then have reaſon to be no longer afraid, either of our Sins, or of your Vengeance: For what can all that be able to do againſt us, whilſt we are under the ſhelter of the Croſs of CHRIST, and are Bath'd all over with his Blood, the Price,

Price, and Merit of which he is very willing to apply to us?

When a Man eſteems the Friendſhip of any Perſon, ſays a great Servant of God, he endeavour's to inſinuate and keep himſelf in his Favour, by all manner of reſpect and compleaſance; by a thouſand ſervices, to which he is not at all oblig'd, and by particular care to avoid every thing, which may be never ſo little diſpleaſing. Men out of an apprehenſion of puniſhment forbear wounding Mortally, even their Deadly Enemies: They neither do good nor harm to thoſe, by whom they deſire neither to be lov'd nor hated: But how little ſoever they offend a Man, eſpecially if often and on purpoſe, it is plain they equally deſpiſe his love and his hatred; and if they proceed not to great injuries, it is rather for fear of his Power, than of his Averſion. Thoſe Perſons who are reſolv'd to commit every thing except great Sins, have good reaſon to fear leaſt Charity ſhou'd be wholly extinguiſh'd in them: And if they will but a little ſeriouſly Examin themſelves, they will acknowledge that they avoid not grievous Sins, but only for fear of the grievous pains, with which ſuch as commit them are puniſh'd by God; that they wou'd be willing to run the hazard of diſpleaſing him, if the ſight of Hell did not frighten 'em; and that they wiſh'd with all their Heart, they might offend him without danger of being Puniſh'd: This diſpoſition makes Men fearful; but yet it is the common diſpoſition of ſuch, as make no

*Of Men's indifference to pleaſe God.*

difficulty to commit, of set purpose, all manner of Venial Sins. It is most certain that this motive of avoiding Crimes, is what God has no share in, and by consequence do's no way engage him to succour us: So that it is very hard for a Man, who will avoid none but Mortal Sins, to avoid them long.

*Of Confession.* The Sacrament of Pennance is an easie and an efficacious remedy for curing all the Diseases of the Soul, and obtaining pardon for all our Sins: It is easie, because it is only declaring our Sins to a Priest, who is CHRIST's Vicar, with a hearty sorrow for having offended a God, infinitly amiable and who infinitly loves us: For to what end should a Man Confess his Sins, if he be not sorry and desirous to mend what he Confesses? It is surely efficacious, because all the Merits of a God-Man are apply'd to us. Whence then comes it to pass that so little Fruit is reap'd by this Divine Remedy? Never more Confessions, nor never less Amendment: Men accustome themselves to Confessions, just as they do to the Faults they Confess: We even seem to Confess our failings for no other end but to make them, as one may say, better acquainted and more familiar to us: Do we want sincerity? We seldom Confess, with design to become more Criminal: We want Contrition, and have but a superficial, seeming Sorrow, especially if we get any Temporal advantage by Sin, or that they are ordinary Sins, which we look upon as small and inconsiderable: We want

want reſolution and a ſteady purpoſe of Amendment, and content our ſelves in deſigning to commit the Fault no more, without being willing to avoid the occaſions that make us fall into Sin; this is a certain ſign there is little ſincerity in our Contrition: But do we not know that want of Contrition is a grievous Sin? Yes, we do know it, and therefore it is, that we endeavour to ſtir our ſelves up to Contrition: But many are in great danger to have their Confeſſions made of no effect by this kind of Contrition: And if they Examin themſelves well, they will ſee that the motive of this pretended Contrition, is often but the fear of committing Sacrilege, and thence it comes, that the Confeſſion being made, that is to ſay, that the danger of committing a Sacrilege being over, they fall again into the ſame Faults as eaſily as if they had never Confeſs'd 'em. What pains muſt not one take, to make a Witty Man change his opinion, eſpecially if he has well examin'd every thing before he has taken it up, and but weak Reaſons are brought againſt it? And ſhall any ever perſwade us, that ſuch frequent Relapſes cou'd be preceeded by a real purpoſe to Sin no more? Have they made this pretended purpoſe without a motive? And if God was really the motive of this purpoſe, that is to ſay, of a generous reſolution, how comes it to paſs, they change ſo ſoon? Was the motive, which they had, too weak? How happens it that the ſame motive remaining, the ſame reſolution ſhou'd not continue? Certainly, we cannot reckon upon ſuch fre- quent

quent Confeſſions, as are not follow'd by any amendment. My God, what trouble do's the remembrance of theſe kind of Confeſſions occaſion, and what pain at the hour of Death! A viſible ſign of true Contrition is, when a Man abhors the occaſion of Sin, as much as he do's the Sin it ſelf: Then, then, and not before, he may be truly ſayd to abhor the ſmalleſt Sins.

*Of Particular Friendſhips.*

There ought to be a moſt ſtrict union, ſays Saint *Baſil*, amongſt the Religious Perſons of the ſame Community; but all particularities of Friendſhip, which two or three of them may have with one another, are to be broken off; how Holy ſoever thoſe tyes may ſeem, that cloſe Union with ſome, is a formal Separation from others. He, ſays this great Saint, who Loves one of his Brethren better than all the reſt, clearly ſhews, by this alone, that he Loves not the reſt perfectly; and by conſequence he Offends the others, and injures the whole Community. Particular Friendſhips, continues he, are in Religion a perpetual Seed of Envy, Suſpicions, Diſtruſts, and Enmities; and make way for Diviſions, Cabals, and ſecret Aſſemblings, which are the loſs and ruin of Religion: For there one diſcover's the deſign's he has, another ſpeaks of the judgments he has made, a third tell's his cauſe of Complaint, and the fourth reveals what he ought to have Conceal'd: There they murmur and ſpeak ill of one another; there they publiſh the Faults of others, and ſpare not even their Superiours; and, by an unhappy

*Baſil in conſt. Monaſt. c. 13.*

*Serm. de inſtitut. Monach.*

unhappy Contagion, they quickly Communicate to one another all that is ill among them. The Devil has not a more dangerous Temptation; nay he has even hardly any more proper means than this, to pervert the moſt fervent Perſons, eſpecially the younger ſort: There needs but one of theſe pretended Friends, who has receiv'd ſome Diſpleaſure, or has ſome cauſe of Complaint, to Communicate preſently to the reſt, all his thoughts of things: Diſtruſting no Body he gives a full Liberty to his Paſſion; they ſmile, or applaud him, either out of a Spirit of Murmuring, or at leaſt, out of a mean, ſervil compleaſance; and theſe kind of familiarities, or particular Friend-ſhips, are the occaſion of their breaking a great many Rules; and often, in complyance with their Friend's humour, of doing a great many things contrary to their Duty. Altho' theſe Perſons, thus united by a particular tye, ſhou'd be ſolidly Vertuous, it is enuff, that this Friendſhip is particular to be reprehenſible. But this, ſo contrary to real Piety, is not often the fault of People ſolidly Vertuous; theſe kind of particular Friendſhips are ſeldom found, but among the Imperfect: If there be but a loose and an indevout Perſon in a Religious Community, he will ſoon ſeek out for ſome with whom he may contract theſe particular tyes of Friendſhip, which are contrary to the true Spirit of Charity and Religion: * But theſe ſort of tyes, ſays Saint *Ephrem*, do the Soul a great deal of prejudice; theſe particular and frequent

* Familiaritates aut colloquia ejusmodi haud exiguum detrimentū pariunt animæ. *S. Ephr. tom.* 1.

quent Dialogues and Diſcourſes do much hurt to true Piety; Men do thereby inſenſibly loſe the Spirit of Devotion; thence proceeds a diſguſt for diſcourſes of Piety, and a ſecret averſion for Perſons altogether Vertuous, whoſe very Preſence puts them upon the rack. It is by theſe familiar Converſations, that the beſt reſolutions, and the moſt excellent thoughts, which they had at Prayers, at Communion and at Maſs, are caſt away and Shipwrack'd: It is by them, that the wholſom Counſels of a Vertuous Director, and the admonitions of a Charitable Superiour, loſe their force, and become uſeleſs, either by Raillery, if they are ſpoken of, or, by Maxims there advanc'd, wholly oppoſit to the true Spirit of JESUS CHRIST. There are very few Vertuous enuff to hold out and ſtand the ſhock of ſuch occaſions, and how many who have began well, have been ſplit upon this Rock, and unhappily loſt by particular tyes with ſuch falſe Friends? For which reaſon, continues this Saint, Men muſt avoid with great care all ſuch combinations, and act by this Principle; that in Religion one muſt not entertain any ſuch kind of particular Familiarities: Our Friendſhip ought to be wholly Spiritual; not founded on Fleſh and Blood, or on any other Human Foundation, but on God alone.

*Of the happineſs of Religious Perſons.*

Oh! What contentment wou'd you Religious Souls have, if you had but given your ſelves up intirely to JESUS CHRIST! One muſt be very unhappy, not to have found his account with ſo good a Maſter as him,

to

to whom you have Devoted your ſelf: Your happineſs will encreaſe, in the ſame meaſure as you with-draw your Hearts from all things of this World, to Conſecrat them wholly and intirely to him: You have but one thing to fear, and that is, leaſt the Love of eaſe and Pleaſure, which Men naturally taſt in a State remov'd from noiſe, tumult, and troubles, ſhou'd produce a part of the Joy, which you will feel: If that ſhou'd happen, your Joy wou'd be but a falſe one: It is the Croſs that you ought to ſeek and Love in the State which you have choſen: I mean that Croſs, which feels heavieſt to Nature, and moſt Shock's our Inclinations. It is very hard not to find always ſome one of this kind in a Community: There is ever ſomething which ſhock's either our humour, or opinions; one muſt be conſtantly on his garde, to profit by theſe precious occaſions, and to ſubmit in all things both his Will and his Judgment: Without this, there is no enjoying of a Perfect Peace; or, at leaſt, no enjoying it long: You are indeed happy, for having enter'd into a Houſe where ſo much Vertue and perfect Charity do's reign: I know that altho' there had been leſs, it cou'd not hurt a fervent Perſon, one who ſeeks for nothing but God: For Men ſeldom think of the Defects of others, when they are wholly taken up in correcting their own; every thing turns to the good of him, who intends well; and the ill Examples, which corrupt the Weak, ſtir up thoſe, who have any Love for our Lord, to endeavour to re-

pair the wrongs he ſuffers from the negligent; and for fear leaſt they themſelves ſhou'd likewiſe become negligent: But yet nevertheleſs it is an advantage for a Man, to have always good Examples before him; and to have in his Eyes models that may waken him, and reproach his ſloath and inſenſibility, as often as he look's 'em in the Face. There are allways ſome ſuch to be found in numerous Families; but at worſt, the Dead may ſerve us inſtead of the Liveing; for which reaſon I Believe you wou'd do well, to Read often, and with Attention, the Life of Perſons of your Order, who by the practice of Vertues proper for their State, arriv'd to a great degree of Sanctity: I ſuppoſe that thoſe who govern you will approve of this Advice; for it wou'd be better, as one may ſay, to remain idle, than to do any thing without their conſent and approbation: But ſuppoſing they do approve of this Method, apply your ſelf to what you Read, and remark well the Ways, which are to be taken to come to that Point of Perfection, which they have acquir'd by the Grace of our Lord JESUS. You will find, they have done few things, which you may not Practice thro' the aſſiſtance of the ſame Grace: I have but one Word more to ſay to you, but it is an eſſential one, and I heartily pray God, that it may never go out of your Mind; becauſe I know, if you obſerve it, you will be very well ſatisfied all your Life: Remember that you enter'd not into Religion but to ſave your ſelf in particular,

cular, and to diſpoſe your ſelf to render an account to God, when it ſhall pleaſe him to call you to it, and that this ought to be your only care: Your Rule and your Vows will be the Articles upon which you will be Examin'd; order your matters ſo, that you may be always ready in this Point. Let others live as they pleaſe; that is not your buſineſs: Ah! What a horrible Temptation is that of troubling ones ſelf with the Conduct of others! Let it ſuffice you to know what will be demanded of you; and be fully perſwaded that which is commanded you, whether it ſeems reaſonable or not to you, if there be no Sin in it, is what God himſelf Commands you: What you may judge worthy of blame, is perhaps (what do I ſay, perhaps?) is, without doubt, what God has judg'd in your circumſtances moſt proper for your Sanctification: A Superiour may govern ill, but it is impoſſible, that God ſhou'd not by him govern you well: Imprint this deeply in your Mind, for if you do not build upon this Principle, you will loſe your time in Religion, becauſe your whole Life is nothing elſe but Obedience: Now this Obedience is without Merit, when it is not given to God, in the Perſon of thoſe he has put over you in his place: And it is certain, that we do not conſider God, when we take upon us to Judge, to Examin, and above all things, to Condemn that which he Orders us. When we are influenced by the Holy Ghoſt, we are inſpir'd with the Simplicity of an Infant, which thinks every thing good, and every thing rea-

ſonable; or, to ſpeak more properly, with a Divine Prudence, which diſcovers God in all things, acknowledges him in all Perſons, even in thoſe who are leſs Vertuous, or have leſs Natural, or Supernatural Qualities which repreſent him: The more reaſon you have, the more Submiſſion of Spirit ought you to have; becauſe there is nothing ſo reaſonable, nothing ſo profitable, as to ſuffer yourſelf to be govern'd by God, in what ever manner he thinks fit, and by what ever Perſon he is pleas'd to make uſe of, for that purpoſe. One cannot begin too ſoon in Religion, to love Poverty: What ſweetneſs is there in being able to ſay to JESUS CHRIST, My Saviour, I poſſeſs nothing but you! Amongſt all the things that are for my uſe, there is not one I have any Affection for; and if I perceiv'd the leaſt Inclination for any thing elſe but you, I wou'd from this Moment make it away: My God! How ſweet it is to Dye with a Crucifix in one's Hand, when he has lead a Life conformable to that of a Crucified JESUS!

*Of Confidence in Chriſt.*

It may be ſayd that nothing but our ſmall truſt and confidence hinders us from profiting by the Preſence of JESUS CHRIST in the Bleſſed Sacrament, who has not for nothing taken up his habitation among us: But we have ſo ſeldome recourſe to him, and we go thither with ſo little Faith, that it is no wonder we ſhou'd have ſo little a ſhare in the Treaſure of the Graces and the Bleſſings, which he Communicates to thoſe, who

who addreſs themſelves to him, as to the Maſter and Fountain of all Perfection. A Man muſt not wonder, that the Devil ſhou'd forget nothing to hinder Chriſtians from frequent Communion, and ſhou'd endeavour to give them a Diſguſt, or at leaſt an indifference for JESUS CHRIST in that Adorable Myſtery. He is ſenſible that as the Love for JESUS CHRIST in the Holy Sacrament, is the Source of all good things, and divine favours; ſo the eſtranging our ſelf from this Source, is the moſt ordinary cauſe of all the Evils we ſuffer.

Ecce qui elongant ſe à te peribunt.

It is to be fear'd that Men often take the withdrawing or abſence of ſenſible reliſhes of Devotion, for a want of Fervour; and on the contrary, inward Conſolations, for a mark of great Fervency: Which miſtake, when after ſome time we find our ſelves Deſtitute of theſe Comforts, do's much diſcourage us, and makes us afterwards fall into Faults, that we are not careful preſently to repair; from whence follows a real ſtate of Luke-warmneſs. Beſides we imagine that to begin to act holily, as Men do when full of Fervency and Devotion, we muſt endeavour to put our ſelves into that heat and fervour we loſt; but it is quite contrary: One muſt to recall and recover that heat, begin by the practice of Humility and Mortification, as if he were conducted and carried on by a ſenſible Grace. It is not Fervour which makes a Man Humble, Charitable, Regular and Mortified; but it is the Exerciſe of Humility, Charity, Regularity, and

*Of true Fervour.*

and Mortification. An Exerciſe, which is conſtant and generous, will make us fervent in the ſenſe and manner wherein fervour, ought to be underſtood. My God, how Important a leſſon is this, and how proper to be often made the Subject of our Meditation! And were it but put in Practice, how great a progreſs in Vertue wou'd Men make in a very little time?

*Of Voluntary Poverty.*

O, my God! when ſhall we underſtand the benefit and advantage of Poverty; and love it as much as you love thoſe who do really love it? What will it ſignifie to have made a Vow of Poverty, if we are afraid of wanting ſomething? If we are afraid of feeling the effects of Poverty? If we wou'd be as ſecure as the Rich to want nothing? Who, in good earneſt, wou'd not be Poor at this rate? And what ſhou'd we Merit from God by ſo convenient a Poverty? A Poverty, which oftentimes ſet's Men more at their Eaſe, than they were before they Vow'd it? A Poverty, whereby they do in reality want nothing?

*Of Dryneſs or want of Fervour in the Exerciſes of Piety.*

It is a great error for a Man to torment and afflict himſelf, for not finding inward lights, and ſtrong conſolations at Prayers; to trouble his head, and break his brains, to raiſe in himſelf a ſenſible Devotion, when he Communicates, or practiſes other Exerciſes of Piety, and yet notwithſtanding to neglect ſmall Faults, little Obſervances, the occaſions which a Man has of Mortifying his Deſires, and his Self-will, of overcoming human Reſpects, and humbling himſelf before

fore Men. Whereas if a Man wou'd act rationally, he wou'd think of nothing but this laſt Point, without the leaſt effort, or endeavour to ſucceed, according to his own Judgment, in Spiritual Exerciſes: I ſay according to his own Judgment; becauſe in truth Men do never ſucceed in them better, than when they ſuffer with Humility that Dryneſs and want of pretended Fervour, which Nature loves ſo much, and which the real Love of God deſpiſes, and even rejects as much as is poſſible.

*Of the eaſineſs Men find in engaging themſelves in the World.*

It is agreed on all Hands, that thoſe, whom God call's to his particular ſervice, are happy: Freed from a hundred occaſions of Diſcontent, which Worldlings are overwhelm'd with, they enjoy that ſweet Peace and Calm of Conſcience, which is the common effect of Vertue. How often do Worldlings acknowledge, when they diſcourſe a-right, that Religious Perſons are happy? And yet let but a Young Man make a reſolution of quitting the World, and enjoying that ſweet felicity of Religion, what difficulty do's he not meet with from his Relations? What obſtacles? They require whole Years to prove the reality of his Vocation; they make him a full repreſentation of what he is to ſuffer in the State of Life he intends to embrace, and exaggerate all it's Difficulties. If he do but quit his Parents to Conſecrate himſelf wholly to God, what Lamentations, what Tears! One wou'd think his lot very unfortunate, and that he was about to expoſe himſelf to an evident danger both of his

his Life and Salvation: But if he deſigns for the World, no ſuch precaution is requir'd; he has always thought enuff on't, there is no time requir'd to prove the reality of his Vocation, which notwithſtanding, is very dangerous: They do not only, not exaggerate the hardſhips which are to be endur'd in the World; but they alſo ſtudy to diſguiſe and diſſemble the real Evils, which they cannot hide: And tho' he be an only Son, and a moſt accompliſh'd Young Man, yet they can ſee him, in Cold Blood, and with Pleaſure, engage himſelf in the World; and ſeldom aske him, whether he has well thought of what he is going to do: But they wou'dbe in the greateſt concern, if they knew he had thoughts of quitting and renouncing the World. Whence do's this mighty difference proceed? Is it that it is eaſier to work out one's Salvation in the World? No, no; certainly that cannot be the reaſon; but the true one is, that Salvation is commonly the laſt thing Men take into their Conſideration, when they are deliberating about the choice of this or that State of Life for their Children.

*Of Mens falſe notion of Holineſs.*

It is a ſtrange thing that every Man ſhou'd look upon and conſider Holineſs with reference to the State wherein he is not; and that few ſhou'd apply themſelves to acquire that Holineſs, which is proper to the State wherein they are: The Poor Man thinks of the powerful means which the Rich have to be Holy; and the Rich are perſwaded, that it is eaſie to arrive to a great degree of Vertue,

Vertue, when once Men are freed from the obſtacles which Wealth puts in the way of their Salvation: If they are Young, then they find no time ſo proper as Old Age to Labour in the work of Salvation: Youth, ſay they, is the time for Pleaſure, the care of Salvation muſt be defer'd to another ſeaſon; if they are Old, they are continually grieving for having loſt in their Youth the means they had of becoming Holy, and for having then omitted many good Works they might have done, which they are now unable to do: Worldlings believe their State improper for Holineſs, becauſe they look not upon Chriſtian Vertues, but with reference to the greateſt Auſterities, and under a notion proper to a Religious State: Even Religious Perſons themſelves often loſe courage in the way of Perfection, which they have embraced, becauſe they look not upon Holineſs, but thro' the perſpective of Hair-ſhirts, Sack-cloth and Aſhes, and with reſpect to all thoſe heroic Actions, which are admir'd in the Lives of the greateſt Saints; and upon this falſe Idea of Holineſs which they frame to themſelves, the moſt part grow weary, and Live, as if Sanctity was not their buſineſs, or not proper for the State they are in. My God, what numbers of People are deceiv'd, and prejudic'd by this Error?

*Of the Holineſs which is proper for every State of Life.*

Every one ought to look upon Holineſs with reference to the State whereunto God has call'd him: God wou'd have every Man become Holy; *Hæc eſt voluntas Dei, ſanctificatio veſtra.*

*veſtra*: But no Man will ever become Holy, without perfectly acquitting himſelf of the particular Duties of the State of Life wherein God has placed him: The Vertue, which God requires from a General of an Army, wou'd be very improper for a common Artizan: A Maſter of a Family, and a Magiſtrat, are oblig'd to particular Duties, very different from thoſe, which God repuires from one that lives retir'd. The People of the World are call'd to the Exerciſe of Vertues, which wou'd not be proper for a Religious Perſon; and even that Perfection, which God exacts from Religious Perſons, has different Degrees: The Vertue of Beginners, is far different from that which God expects from the more Perfect. The moſt ſure and moſt effectual way to become a great Saint, is not to apply himſelf to any thing, but the making himſelf Perfect in the State he is in. For this end it is the Church do's propoſe to us the Example of great Saints of all Ages, States and Conditions. The ſtout couragious Woman, that Heroine ſo much commended in Scripture, made her ſelf a Saint in the management of her Houſhold affairs; Saint *Edward* made himſelf a Saint upon the Throne; Saint *Iſidor* in following the Plow; Saint *Elzear* in the Court: And there is no body, but may attain, by the help of Grace, which is never wanting, to the Perfection of the State whereunto God has call'd him.

He that deſpiſes ſmall things, ſays *Eccleſiaſticus*, ſhall fall by little and little: The Doctrine contain'd in theſe Words, ſays a great Servant of God, is of the laſt importance for all the World, and particularly for thoſe, who aſpire to Perfection. For Men are more careful to be exact in great things becauſe they carry with them their own Recommendation, but it is common to relax and grow careleſs in other matters, becauſe they are before hand perſwaded, that to fail in them is of no great conſequence: But they are deceiv'd; and to fail in them is ſo dangerous, that it may be ſayd, the moſt ordinary cauſe of Mens not attaining to a higher Degree of Vertue, and to the Perfection of their State, or calling, is their neglect of the ſmalleſt things.

*Of ſmall Faults.*

Qui ſpernit modica paulatim decidet. *Eccleſ.* 19.

* Thoſe, who run themſelves into the greateſt Diſorders, ſays Saint *Bernard*, begin at firſt by very ſmall Faults, and no body runs to exceſs all of a ſudden, but by degrees; and it is juſt in Spiritual Diſeaſes as it is in thoſe of the Body; both the one, and the other, come to a head by little and little: If care had been taken to ſtop that Defluxion, to remove that Evil, which might have been eaſily cur'd at firſt, this Perſon, now a Dying, wou'd have been at this time in perfect Health. When you ſee, add's this Saint, a Servant of God fall into ſome grievous or enormous Fault, do not Believe, that Evil was then begun: Men, who have long Perſever'd in Innocence, and Purity, rarely happen to fall at one dath, into

* A minimis incipiunt qui in maxima proruunt: nemo repente fit peſſimus.

into any great and grievous Sin: A little attention, and a very little care, at the beginning, wou'd have blasted it in the bud, and quite stopt it's growth, and further progress; but because they neglected the Evil when it was yet small, and took no care to mend their little Faults, and despis'd small things; hence it is, I say, that People, who had till then Liv'd so well, have fallen so fouly.

There is indeed reason to be astonish'd, and at the same time to fear, when one thinks that the loss of so many People, tumbled down into the Infernal Precipice, had such weak causes in the beginning. My God, it were to be wish'd, Men were fully perswaded of so important a truth, on which depends, as one may say, the Salvation, or at least, the Perfection of most People. The Devil, is too cunning to attack at first the Servants of God, in things that are essential, and he wou'd succeed but ill, if he shou'd presently put a timerous Soul upon the committal of a Mortal Sin. No, no; he insinuat's himself by small things, and by little and little get's Possession of the Soul before he is perceiv'd to be enter'd: Besides these sorts of infidelities in the smallest matters, are always punish'd by the substraction of one Grace or other; and by the Substraction of that Grace, a Man will be unhappily depriv'd of many others, without which, in some certain occasions, he will infallibly yield to the Temptation: * It is upon this account that Saint *Gregory* says, small Faults are in some manner more dangerous

*Greg. 3. p. ad mo. 34*

* Mirabile quidem & inaudicum

gerous than great ones: And Saint *Chrysostome* speaking upon the same subject, I dare advance, says he, a proposition, which will appear surprising and new, and it is this; that me thinks, a Man ought sometimes to be less careful to fly from great Sins, than to avoid small Faults; for the enormity of those do naturally strike us with horrour; but we easily grow familiar with these, because they are so inconsiderable. Shall we after this despise light Faults, which the Saints were more apprehensive of, and more carefull to avoid, than grievous Sins? * What imports it in a Ship-wrack, says Saint *Austin*, whether a great Wave swallow up the Vessel, or whether the Water coming in by little and little, and by negligence suffer'd to remain in the bottom, do's at last sink it? You are forewarn'd, and upon your garde against great Sins, says the same Saint, in another place, but what do you do to avoid the little ones? *Præcavisti magna, de minutis quid agis? An non times minuta?* Is it that you are not afraid of these small Sins? Alas! You have thrown over board, and cast into the Sea the great and heavy Packs and Bales, which might have sunk your Vessel; you have at your Entrance into Religion parted with what was most considerable to you; but take care that the Sand at bottom do's not yet make it Sinck, *Projecisti molem vide nè arenâ obruaris.* You have happily escap'd all the Tempests rais'd against you in the raging Sea of the World; take care that in neglecting some certain small Banks of Sand, which

dicere audeo; solet mihi nonnunquam non tanto studio magna videri esse peccata vitanda, quanto parva & vilia. *Chrys.* 87. *sup. Matt.*

* Quid enim interest ad naufragium, utrum uno grandi fluctu navis operiatur & obruatur, aut paulatim subrepens aqua in sentinam, & per negligentiâ derelicta atque contempta, impleat Navem atque submergat. *Aug. epist.* 118. *ad Seleu.* *Aug. sup. Ps.* 39.

which do not appear, you do not ſplit and miſcarry in the very Port of Religion. Great Graces are commonly the Fruit of the Faithfulneſs a Man has ſhown in the ſmalleſt matters: And this fidelity likewiſe, is the effect of a great Love of God: And how miſerable muſt we needs be, if by our looſneſs and luke-warmneſs we do deprive our ſelves of theſe extraordinary ſuccours, of theſe ſingular favours, which inſpire us with ſo much courage againſt the moſt violent Temptations, and which are ſo neceſſary on ſeveral occaſions? How often do we doubt whether we have not conſented to a Sin? What an advantage wou'd it be to us in ſo melancholy a State to have been liberal towards God, and to have deſerv'd this ſpecial ſuccour, by which we ſhou'd have been well aſſur'd, to have always ſupported our ſelves againſt all the aſſaults of Temptation, and without which we ſhou'd not only be in great danger of falling by them, but perhaps of being alſo effectually overcome?

*Of Fidelity in the ſmalleſt things.*

He that is Faithful in little things, will be Faithful in great; and to ſpeak properly, none but great Souls are capable of this great fidelity. Small things are ſmall indeed, but to be Faithful in acquitting ones ſelf perfectly well in all that ſeems little in the Service of God, is not a little thing. This fidelity wou'd in truth be nothing, if a Man ſhou'd be wanting in great matters; but let us acknowledge that faithfulneſs, even in the ſmalleſt things, is ſomething very great; for when one loves much,

much, nothing is neglected which can poſſibly pleaſe the Perſon lov'd.

The moſt daring and moſt valiant of the People of *Iſraël* were not choſen by God to Conquer the *Madianites*; one of the moſt Compleat and Famous of all Victories, was obtain'd, * by three hundred *Iſraëlites*, becauſe they had not bent their Knees to drink the more conveniently. What ſmaller Ceremony than to lift up ones Hands to Heaven? And yet it was upon this poſture that the Victory over the *Amalacites* did depend; * and the moment *Moyſes* let his Hands fall down, the People of *Iſraël* perceiv'd themſelves overcome: What have you done *Joas*, cry'd out in anger Prophet *Eliſha*? You have ſtruck the Earth but thrice with your Dart; * if you had ſtruck it five or ſix times, you had made your ſelf Maſter of all *Syria*, and routed out the Enemies: The Wall's of *Jerico* fell down in ſight of the People of *Iſraël*; and this great Conqueſt depended on a light Ceremony, of which, theſe half Devotes, who eſteem ſmall things ſo little, wou'd have made little or no account. Infine it is enuff to ſay, that Heaven, that a happy Eternity, that God himſelf is according to CHRIST's expreſſion the recompence of being Faithful in the ſmalleſt things. *Quia ſuper pauca fuiſti fidelis .... intra in gaudium Domini tui.*

* In trecentis viris qui lambuerunt aquas, liberabo vos.

* Cumque levaret *Moyſes* manus vincebat *Iſraël*. &c.

* Si percuſſiſſes quinquies, aut ſexies, percuſſiſſes *Syriam* uſque ad conſumptionem.

*Of the ſource or ſpring of our Imperfections.*

The reaſon why ſo few become Perfect, altho' moſt aſpire to be ſo, is becauſe they are but half willing to become Perfect: They conceive eaſily enuff the Maxims of the Goſpel,

Gospel, and the important Verities, which are, as it were, the first Principles of true Piety; but they are not sincere in the application of them: They do not search for Arguments to endaevour to prove that one must not do himself Violence to enter into the Kingdom of Heaven; but they find reasons to perswade themselves, that in some occasions, wherein Violence wou'd cost them dear, they may dispense with doing themselves Violence: They make no doubt but their Passions are to be repress'd and kept under; they even fight against them, and often seem to get the better; but they meddle not with their most prevalent Passion; and yet it is against this, preferably to all others, they are to make War, and without which their other advantages over the Enemy signifie nothing. A Man must continually watch over himself, and over all the Motives of his Heart, to repress an infinity of Human Respects, which inperceptibly steal upon him, and almost continual secret fetches for his own Interest, and a thousand other Intrigues of self love, which surprise the most Vertuous, and mingling themselves with the holiest of their Actions, destroy almost all their Merit, or at least do much lessen their Perfection.

*Of our false Compleasance to others.*

True Piety is not at all troublesome, nor inconvenient; it is full of Charity to all the World: A Man solidly Vertuous is extreamly Just, Civil and Obliging; never angry, nor disturb'd, always in good Humour, always ready to do good to others, and never harsh but

but to himſelf. The Spirit of JESUS CHRIST being a Spirit of Peace and Sweetneſs; Self-Love, which is extreamly ingenious to draw advantages from every thing, makes uſe of this very Principle to deceive many who make Profeſſion of Piety, by making them draw from it conſequences, little conformable to the true Spirit of our Bleſſed Saviour. They pretend to pleaſe all the World, and wou'd diſpleaſe no Body, not even thoſe who reliſh not the Maxims of the Goſpel: But they cannot but diſpleaſe JESUS CHRIST, if they pretend not to Diſpleaſe ſuch kind of Perſons as thoſe. Hence proceeds that cowardly and unhappy compleaſance, which ſo often makes us aſham'd to rank and own our ſelves on CHRIST's ſide, and openly declare our ſelves his Diſciples. One muſt, ſay they, be compleaſant, and diſoblige no body: It is very true; but who has told you that you diſoblige People, when you punctually obſerve your Rules, when you are exact, recollected, modeſt and do your Duty? And if that be to diſoblige the Imperfect, who can forbear, or diſpenſe with his diſobligeing them in this Point, that wou'd not betray his Conſcience and diſpleaſe God?

*Of Punctuality or exactneſs.*

A Man is not afraid to paſs for one of little Wit, or a Scrupulous Perſon for being earneſtly bent upon his own Intereſt, and careful in Worldly affairs: To be continually intent to make his advantage of every thing, to let ſlip no occaſion of making his Fortune, is what in this Age makes one be call'd an able Man, a Man of good Senſe:

Wiſdom and Conduct; but if he apply's himſelf ſeriouſly to the buſſineſs of his Salvation, and carefully endeavour's to profit by the ſmalleſt occaſions of pleaſing God, and increaſing in Vertue; if he be exact in performing the ſmalleſt Duties and Obligations of his State and Calling, and faithful in little things, it is preſently call'd Weakneſs and Scrupuloſity, and he is blam'd and raillied for it: And thoſe, who have a good will to pleaſe God, do often find nothing in the Practice of Vertue harder to bear, nothing that puts their courage to a greater ſtreſs than theſe little Perſecutions: Ah Lord! If an extream deſire of pleaſing thee were ill receiv'd among Infidels, one might have Patience; but that it ſhou'd meet the ſame kind of Treatment from Chriſtians, from People who make Profeſſion of being your Servants, is what one can hardly Comprehend!

*Of the ſeveral ſhifts of Self-Love.*

My God! What a deal of trouble wou'd a little Integrity and Sincerity ſave thoſe, who are in thy Service! We do not ſeek God with Simplicity enuff; we have but a half will to pleaſe him; and always ſeek our ſelves, even then when we pretend to ſeek him moſt. Ah my God! Is it a doubtful or a dangerous thing for Men to give themſelves up entirely and perfectly to thee, that they muſt be ſo long a deliberating and reſolving it! But Self-Love ſpoiles all, and it is but too true, that the greateſt part of Man-kind act but by this Principle, and all the difference between many who pretend

to

to be Spiritual Perſons, and others, is that Self-Love act's in theſe more openly and bare faced; but is in theſe a little more diſguis'd and leſs viſible. And if a Man wou'd take the pains to reflect upon the true Motives of the greateſt part of ſuch Actions as ſeem leaſt Defective, he wou'd diſcover in them a thouſand windings and turnings of Self-Love, which hinder them from being Fruitful and Advantagious.

*Of God's Love and Tenderneſs for thoſe who Serve him.*

Saint *Baſil* ſays, that all the Holineſs, and Perfection of a Chriſtian Life, conſiſts in making God the cauſe of all things, and in conforming a Man's ſelf to his Divine Will. My God, if we were fully perſwaded of this important Truth, what true ſweetneſs ſhou'd we taſt, and what Perfect tranquillity ſhou'd we enjoy in a Spiritual Life! Oh, how great a ſatisfaction is it to be certain, that nothing, Sin only excepted, happens in the World, but by the particular Providence of God; and that this very God has a tender Love for us; and if all the World ought to have this Confidence in God, how much more ought Religious Perſons to have it? They whom he has particularly Adopted, whom he has inſpir'd with the true Sentiments of Children toward their Fathers: My Father and my Mother have abandon'd and caſt me off, but the Lord has taken me into his care and protection. What an advantagious change have we made? And how good a Father have we choſen in the place of him we have quitted? Hereafter we may ſay with more Right and Confi-

*Pſal.* 26.

*Pſal.* 22. & 26. dence than any Body, The Lord do's conduct and take care of me, and I ſhall want nothing: It is true I am Poor and Stripp'd of all things, but the Lord will provide for me, and never ſuffer me to want. A Man cannot but be comforted, and feel in his Heart an extraordinary, overflowing tenderneſs for God, when he reflects that God himſelf takes care of him, and thinks of him with as much goodneſs and application, as if his Eternal Providence had no other Creature in the whole World to conſerve but him. Oh! What cauſe ſhou'd we find to Love God, and give our ſelves up wholly to him, if we wou'd but reflect upon the great Tenderneſs he has for us, and upon what we ow to his paternal Providence!

You fancy to your ſelf, that this fit of Sickneſs came by Chance, that this Humiliation, or that Mortification, was the effect of a Man's Paſſion towards you: Men may indeed act out of Paſſion; but do you not know that God makes uſe of theſe very Men's Paſſions, to put in execution the advantagious deſigns he had form'd for you? Men may perhaps endeavour to Revenge themſelves by treating you in that manner; but yet God ſuffers them not to act ſo but for your good.

*Joſeph's* Brethren acted not but by a Spirit of Revenge; and ſold not their Brother but with an Intention to deſtroy him: But God made uſe of this wicked deſign for the glory of this Innocent Perſon. Whence comes it to paſs that we put not our Confidence in God,

God, ſince we have ſuch ſtrong Motives to put our whole truſt in him? The reaſon is, becauſe we are not Bountiful towards him; we give him nothing of what he demands of us but with Regret, by halves, and imperfectly; we always refuſe him ſomething, and this is the reaſon that we never ask him any thing but with fear, trembling, and diſtruſt.

*Of what we ought to imitate in Vertuous Perſons.*

Good Examples are a great help, and it is eaſie to be Holy amongſt the Holy; and the practice of Vertue becomes eaſie, when one Lives with ſuch as are eminently Vertuous: You muſt notwithſtanding take care not to propoſe for a model any Perſon, how Vertuous ſoever he may ſeem to be, but you muſt imitate his Vertues; for thoſe, who are now ſolidly Vertuous, may hereafter come to be Perverted: The moſt Perfect, to ſpeak properly, are thoſe who have the feweſt Faults; therefore when a Man propoſes even one of theſe for a Pattern, he runs the danger of imitating him in his Imperfections; if he be but once perſwaded of his Vertue, he makes no difficulty to follow blindly his Examples; he eaſily do's what he ſees him do, and often imitates his Faults rather than his Vertues.

*Of the inſenſibility occaſion'd by Relaxation.*

Perſons Conſecrated to God, who Live looſly; a Prieſt, who has no Devotion, and who by his behaviour diſhonours the ſublime Sanctity of his Character; theſe People, I ſay, are much to be Pitied: And how can they, without trouble and anguiſh, think of the account they muſt one Day make to God,

of the many Graces they have made uſeleſs, of the good they were oblig'd to do, and of which they have render'd themſelves incapable, of the many means they had to become great Saints, and which they were unwilling to make use of? The ſame thing happens to them, as do's to thoſe who, after they have harken'd to God, reliſh'd his ways, and Serv'd him for ſome time with Fervour, do afterwards fall off, grow looſe, and take diſguſt at his Service. Inſenſibility, which often degenerat's into a kind of hardneſs of Heart, is the ordinary Chaſtiſement, with which God do's not ſeldom, and ſometimes very ſoon Puniſh in this Life their Infidelity: We have a terrible Example of this Inſenſibility, and being abandon'd by God, in the Perſon of *Judas.*: One cannot doubt this Apoſtle had receiv'd very ſingular Favours from JESUS CHRIST; but he becomes looſe and perverted, and by a ſtrange Inſenſibility, his Evil is become, almoſt all of a ſudden, incurable: CHRIST ſpoke the moſt moving things in the World, and yet *Judas* was not touch'd: Our moſt Amiable Saviour preſs'd him, both in the ſweeteſt manner poſſible, and the moſt proper to Convert him; the Son of God declar'd the wicked deſign of this Traytor, without naming him; *One of you ſhall Betray me:* All the Apoſtles are frightned; *Judas* alone, to whom it was adreſs'd, was not mov'd at it: From Inſenſibility a Man eaſily go's on to Impudence; *Judas* has the Confidence to ask JESUS CHRIST if that diſcourſe was meant

Unus ex vobis tradet me.

meant to him: *To you, I ſay*: Our Saviour no longer hides it from him; but this ſecond inſtance, which ought to have ſtruck him to the Ground, made no impreſſion on his harden'd Soul; he even calmly heard the terrible threat made by CHRIST JESUS, *Wo be to him, by whom the Son of Man ſhall be Betray'd.* Is he the leſs Inſenſible for CHRIST'S having waſh'd his Feet, and given himſelf to him in the Communion; for having advertis'd, and threatned him? Nothing cou'd move him; nothing cou'd ſtop him; forth he go's, and commits the crime; and with a Treacherous Kiſs, compleats the blackeſt Malice that ever was perpetrated by Man.

Tu dixiſti.

Væ homini illi, per quem Filius hominis tradetur:

Who after this will not ſtand in aw, and be afraid of this great Evil of Inſenſibility, ſo much the more to be dreaded, that one cannot know it, till after a Man is freed from it? What place, what ſuccour, can put us out of the danger of falling into this Inſenſibility? The ſureſt ſign that a Man is not in this State, is his fear of being in it: And none are harder to be Converted, than thoſe who Believe they do not ſtand in need of Converſion.

*Of the Thoughts of Death.*

The Thought of Death is a powerfull means to undeceive and diſabuſe us in the Vanities of this Life; and it is eaſie to be out of conceit with the falſe Pleaſures of this World, the vain Fantomes of Honour, the ſeeming Riches, in the purſuit of which Men tire themſelves, when a Man ſeriouſly Reflect's on what all this muſt end in, at the

hour of Death: A winding Sheet, a Coffin, a Grave, a little Dust, and a little Ashes, is what all the Pride, and all the Grandeur of Man must come to. Please your self with great Projects, value your self much upon your Wealth, and your Friends; and yet, whether you will or no, all this must be parted with, and you your self will be abandon'd by all. There is nothing, O my God, but you alone, that do's not forsake those, who Serve you; and therefore I will no more Love, or Serve any thing but you.

*Of the different way of treating the Perfect and the Imperfect.*

It is very surprising that Men have so great a regard for those who are Imperfect, and so little for those who are Zealous and Fervent. But don't we know that all this happens not but by God's special Providence, in favour of such as he most Loves? Men make not the least difficulty to exercise the Patience of a Man Solidly Vertuous; they will not be afraid to refuse him what he most desires, and treat him in the most disobliging manner possible; and yet they dare not deny the Imperfect any thing; whether it be, that they treat them as they wou'd Sick Persons, whose health is despair'd of, to whom they grant every thing they ask; or else that God, by the most terrible of all Chastisements, is willing to give them up to their own Desires, and let them Live at ease in this World. This distinction, how Mortifying soever it may seem, is very advantagious to the true Servants of God; and gives them great Honour in the opinion of such

ſuch as judge rightly of things, and are animated by the Spirit of JESUS CHRIST.

*Of the Tempers most prone for Vertue.*

Thoſe who are of a ſweet, peaceable Temper, and ſeem born to be Vertuous, are in danger to paſs over their whole Life in a very indifferent State of Vertue, without making any Progreſs in the way of Perfection; if they do not continually watch over the Motions of their own Souls, they are in great danger to have this Natural tranquillity degenerate into an odd kind of indolence, or ſluggiſhneſs, wherein Self-Love do's always pleaſe it ſelf. They do not ſtrive nor endeavour to acquire great Vertues, and are content even to confine themſelves to an obſcure Life: But Humility has no ſhare in this kind of Moderation; it is the pure effect of Self-Love, which avoids the trouble, and prefers an indifferent, moderat Vertue, to one that is more elevated and ſublime, for fear of ſuffering and ſtruggling too much. But, my God! How great a danger do thoſe Men run of Living and Dying without acquiring any Vertue at all, who confine themſelves to one that is indifferent?

*Of True Zeal.*

It is a great Fault in the Exerciſe of good Works, to be diſpleas'd that others ſhou'd do as much, or more good than we: God grant that all thoſe who Preach, may Preach with ſucceſs, with reputation, and profit. I wou'd to God that all Directors of Souls had the gift of Wiſdom, of Judgment, and of Zeal; and that ſolid Piety, which is ſo neceſſary for all of their Profeſſion: So God be but Glorified, what matter is it, whether

it be done by me, or another? It is a certain ſign, that we ſeek nothing but the Glory of God, when the good ſucceſs of others in the Exerciſe of their Miniſtry, gives us a true and real Pleaſure.

*Of Sincerity in God's Service.* Many have ſome deſire to attain Perfection, and do from time to time make ſome efforts to arrive at it; and yet notwithſtanding how very few do obtain it? That which ſtops the greateſt part of Men in the way of Vertue, is the want of ſincerity in the Service of God, ſome ſmall Tyes and Inclinations, which they never do, nor will break off; a certain ſtock of Self-Love, which always diſguiſes it ſelf under the ſpecious pretence of good Senſe, Moderation, Civility, and Prudence, and I know not what ſecret Pride, which ſpoyl's and corrupts moſt of our beſt Actions. God will be Serv'd with a great Simplicity of Heart, with a certain uprightneſs of Soul, which knows nothing of the many windings and turnings of Self-Love, which reignes almoſt every where. We ſeek out for a complying Directour; and put our Wits upon the Wrack, to find out ſeeming reaſons to diſpenſe with our ſelves in certain Duties, which in our Hearts we are ſenſible God requires of us, but which are diſpleaſing to us, and which we are not of a humour to comply with. Can we pretend by all theſe contrivances and human Reſpects to impoſe upon God? Alas! How few are to be found who ſerve God with that Simplicity of Mind, which is ſo neceſſary for the

the making any progreſs in the way of Perfection? Of how many People can it be ſayd, that they do not ſtudy abſolutely to pleaſe God, but to perſwade themſelves, that they may in all things ſatisfie themſelves without diſpleaſing him? If we do but a little croſs our ſelves, Nature will quickly make amends. Whence comes it to paſs that Perſons, who make Profeſſion of Piety, are ſo ſenſible and touchy in the Point of Honour, that the tone of ones Voice, or manner of Speaking, one diſobliging Word, ſhou'd afflict them? The reaſon in truth is, that thoſe ſort of People have ſtill a great fund of Pride; they make uſe of modeſt and humble terms, but indeed to no purpoſe; true Humility is inſeparable from Sweetneſs and Patience; many Believe from the moment they take mean thoughts of themſelves, that they are truly humble; but they deceive themſelves if they are not well pleas'd that others alſo ſhou'd entertain the ſame thoughts of 'em: It is not enuff to know that they have no Vertue, no Merit; they muſt not only Believe this, but be glad that others alſo ſhou'd Believe it.

*Of Submitting ones own Will.*

It is commonly ſaid that Devout Perſons are very much wedded to their own ſenſe; there is perhaps ſome reaſon to ſay ſo; but Men are deceiv'd if they Believe, ſuch as in every thing wou'd have their own Wills, and are head-ſtrong and obſtinate in their own Opinions, can be really and truely Devout: The ſubmiſſion of their own Will is, to ſpeak properly, that ſelf Renouncing, which

which JESUS CHRIST has ſo expreſly, and ſo often commanded us in the Goſpel, without which we cannot be his Diſciples: And we may indeed ſay, that without this ſubmiſſion of our Judgment, and of our Will, there can be no real Vertue.

*Of the Love of* Jeſus Chriſt.

Indeed if any thing, ſays a great Servant of God, cou'd make my Faith ſtagger about the Myſtery of the *Euchariſt*, it wou'd not be the infinite power, which God makes us there ſee, that I ſhou'd doubt of; but it wou'd rather be, that exceeding great Love which he ſhews to all Man-kind in it. It is for certain a thing altogether incomprehenſible, how it comes to paſs, that Men, who Believe that our Saviour is always on our Altars in the moſt Bleſſed and moſt Adorable *Euchariſt*, ſhou'd have nothing but indifference, coldneſs, forget-fulneſs, or diſguſt for him.

Who wou'd not ſay, that ſo prodigious an exceſs of Love ſhou'd at leaſt excite and raiſe up in the Hearts of all Men an earneſt deſire, and an exceſſive Love for God? But alas! It is quite the contrary, and one wou'd think that Men wou'd have Lov'd JESUS CHRIST more, if JESUS CHRIST had Lov'd them leſs. I tremble with horrour, O my God, at the very thought of the indignities and outrages, that the Impiety of bad Chriſtians, or the fury of Hereticks have done you in this moſt Divine Sacrament. With what horrible Sacrileges have they not Profan'd both our Altars and our Churches? And with what Reproaches and Impieties

pieties have thay not a thouſand times treated the Body of JESUS CHRIST? Can a Chriſtian think of thoſe Impieties without conceiving an ardent deſire to repair by all poſſible means ſuch cruel affronts and outrages? But can a Chriſtian then Live, without once thinking of it? Have we hetherto once ſeriouſly thought upon this matter? Or do we much, or at all think of it? We, who ſeldom appear before Altars, and make much a-do to find a quarter of an hours leaſure, to go and Adore JESUS CHRIST, eſpecially at certain times of the Day, when few People viſit him?

Ah Lord! I will hereafter think of it, becauſe I will in good earneſt begin to Love you; and certainly it is high time I ſhou'd begin: I have often heretofore, but always to no purpoſe, made this Reſolution; but, me thinks, this, which I now make, will prove effectual: Yea, my moſt Lovely and moſt Adorable Saviour; I am reſolved to Love you, and to Love you without Reſerve: You Love me too Well, and too Paſſionately wiſh that I ſhou'd Love you, not to grant me Liberally, what I now Implore, the Grace to Love you, and to Love you only, above all things: Full of this Truſt and Confidence, I dare ſay with your Apoſtle, who ſhall hereafter Seperate me from the Love of CHRIST JESUS? * I am certain, that neither Death, nor Life, nor Angels, nor Principalities, nor Powers, nor things Preſent, nor things to Come, nor *Rom.* 8. 38.

nor Greatneſs, nor Adverſity, nor any
ther Thing, or Creature whatſoever ſha
ever be able to Seperate me from, or
ſpeak better, deprive me of the Love
God, which is in CHRIST JESUS our Lor
* *Certus ſum enim, quia neque Mors, neque V*
*ta, neque Angeli, neque Principatus, neque Vir*
*tutes, neque Inſtantia, neque Futura, nequ*
*Fortitudo, * neque Altitudo, neque Profundum*
*neque Creatura alia poterit nos ſeperare*
*Charitate Dei, quæ eſt in* CHRISTO JES
*Domino Noſtro.* Ad Rom. *c.*8. *v.* 38. & 39

*FINIS.*

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